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VAN CLEVE  
MARY S. WATTS

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**VAN CLEVE**



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# VAN CLEVE

BY

MARY S. WATTS

AUTHOR OF "THE LEGACY," "NATHAN BURKE," ETC.

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# CONTENTS

## PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN WHICH WE PERFORM SEVERAL INTRODUCTIONS .	1
II. CONTAINS SOME SLIGHT MEMOIR OF A RESPECTABLE FAMILY . . . . .	15
III. SOME FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS . . . . .	35
IV. CONCERNING THE GILBERTS AND SOME OTHERS .	49
V. THE MAN OF THE HOUSE . . . . .	70
VI. MOSTLY IDLE TALK . . . . .	85
VII. TREATS OF SUNDRY AFFAIRS OF THE HEART .	102
VIII. THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE . . . . .	118
IX. IN WHICH WE GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME . .	133
X. REMEMBER THE <i>MAINE</i> ! . . . . .	145
XI. MRS. AND MISS JAMESON AT HOME . . . .	157
XII. IN WHICH WE PACK OUR VALISES . . . .	174

## PART II

I. IN WHICH WE CONCENTRATE AT TAMPA . . . .	191
II. IN WHICH A CERTAIN KIND OF NEWS TRAVELS FAST	202
III. KEY WEST . . . . .	215
IV. ONCE ABOARD THE LUGGER! . . . . .	234
V. BUT 'T WAS A GLORIOUS VICTORY! . . . .	250
VI. IN WHICH WE WITNESS A SURRENDER . . . .	263

## PART III

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN WHICH WE RETURN TO OUR MUTTON . . .	283
II. IN WHICH MR. KENDRICK PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN .	294
III. OWING TO ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY, MISS GILBERT REGRETS, ETC. . . . .	306
IV. IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER ISSUES A WARRANT . . . . .	319
V. BUSINESS WOMEN . . . . .	335
VI. ANOTHER BUSINESS WOMAN . . . . .	346
VII. IN WHICH WE CALL AT THE GILBERTS' . . .	360
VIII. THE END OF THE TETHER . . . . .	378
IX. WHICH IS IN THE NATURE OF A FOOTNOTE . .	390

**VAN CLEVE**



# VAN CLEVE:

## HIS FRIENDS AND HIS FAMILY

### PART I

#### CHAPTER I

#### IN WHICH WE PERFORM SEVERAL INTRODUCTIONS

THERE comes a time in everybody's life when all the most important events of it seem, somehow, to have occurred about ten years ago. Tom went into business, Dick got married, Harry died — poor fellow! — Such-a-one was born and Such-another started off to Europe, Timbuctoo, the North Pole. These landmarks — some of them look a deal too much like gravestones in our little individual cemetery of failures and regrets — considered in perspective, crowd together at the far end according to the familiar illusion of perspectives; and I suppose it is Youth that we may painfully discern vanishing down that indistinguishable vista, with Middle Age grimly or furtively peering out of your eyes and mine here in the foreground. The present writer, for an instance, being about to record the circumstances of a first meeting with certain of the personages that figure herein, was upon the point of announcing that it took place ten years ago, or such a matter, when, in a shock of recollection, she became aware that it must be much nearer twenty — alack and alas! Some of us are getting gray and frankly think ourselves luckier than some others of us who are getting bald; and we might be

inquiring pathetically for the locality where blooms the rose of yesterday, if we were not enough of philosophers to realize that even for us there is a fine and perfectly satisfying crop of roses coming on to-day, also.

So then, on reflection, it cannot be far short of twenty years since that, going one day into the café of the Saint Simon Hotel and sitting down to luncheon with my friend Mr. J. B. Taylor, we encountered the following described assortment of heroes; although, to be sure, at the time all parties were in a comfortable state of ignorance of their heroic quality and associations, and indeed one or two have probably remained so to this day. J. B. and I dwelt no longer in the city of our youth; there had been many and dire changes besides our departure from it; we were become responsible persons, heads of families, and liked, on his brief visits, to talk over the ancient times of five years back before we were married or had taken up the serious duties of life. During a pause, as we were thus engaged singing the Lord's songs in a strange land, there walked in and took seats at a table near by a company of gentlemen whom perhaps I may have examined a little too openly, being rather surprised to see such a force of trousers in what was generally held to be the plume and petticoat district. Unless I was much mistaken, two of them at least felt themselves more out of place even than they looked — a couple of nice, fresh, green, gawky boys about eighteen or twenty, and growing out of their clothes in every direction, clothes which, by the way, were of a very modest, inexpensive style and by no means new; and one of the lads wore a high collar which was too tight for him, with a sadly frayed edge that had sawed his honest young cockerel's neck into a pitiable state of rawness. What were these two, with their awkward knees and feet and elbows, and their coats crawling up across their backs, and their big schoolboy hands

which I am sure they had only lately learned to wash, and their perverse voices liable to break into hideously embarrassing snorts and cackles at any moment — what were they doing among *us*? It was plain they would have been having a great deal more fun out playing baseball this pleasant, hot afternoon; for they were not at all interested by the glittering atmosphere, the gilt and plate glass of the Saint Simon lunch room; on the contrary, they looked diffidently bored. What were they doing *here*?

At the orders of one of the older men with them (who themselves were being served with whiskey and seltzer), a waiter came and solemnly set down before each young fellow a handsome tall glass of apollinaris lemonade and a plate of macaroons — whereat they exchanged a grin, and one of them, happening to catch my eye, turned very red and exploded alarmingly over his drink, and had to be clapped on the back and otherwise shaken into self-control by his companion. I could hear them gurgling hysterically together and being reprimanded in an undertone by their elders after I had hastily and, I daresay, rather confusedly retreated from my inspection.

I had better never have looked at all, of course; for later, glancing quite casually in that direction, I found myself being stared at with a disconcerting steadiness, ogled clean out of countenance, in fact, by the tall, slim, fair young man who had ordered the boys' drinks (as I noticed) and who seemed to be entertaining the entire party. I do not know whether the others were conscious of it, but J. B., his eyes travelling about the room, at last perceived this unwelcome piece of attention. "What's the matter? Is that fellow annoying you?" says J. B., alertly, making a slight, ominous movement in his chair.

My friend is a native of our fine old neighboring Commonwealth of Kentucky, and of a truly Kentuckian



stature and development. One would think that the man who should offer to annoy any woman in Mr. Taylor's company might with propriety be ignored as presenting a promising subject for the commissioners in lunacy — a view which, however, never occurs to J. B. "That fellow getting fresh?" he inquired, turning himself about briskly and formidably on the spindling little decorated Chippendale chair that creaked in anguish under his weight. "Don't worry. I won't have any row with him *here*, of course!" says J. B., reassuringly, in an aside to me, the while he discharged a glance as pacific as a volley from a six-shooter at the offender, who, for his part, remained quite cool and brazen and eyed us both all over again placidly!

And now I am obliged regretfully to state that as this is no romance, but a plain history of plain events, after the above magnificently sensational, swash-buckling beginning, this incident ended, faded out, trickled off, as one might say, in the feeblest and tamest fashion imaginable. For, before any more looks or words could be exchanged, the fourth man at the other table jumped up and, advancing with his hand out in a cordial style, said affably: "Mr. Breckinridge-Taylor, if I'm not mistaken? How d'ye do, sir? I've been trying for a solid quarter of an hour to get you to look at me — tried mental telegraphy, thought transference, hypnotic suggestion — no use! You *wouldn't* turn around. How d'ye do, sir?"

Mr. Breckinridge-Taylor — an arrangement of his name which, as all his friends know, this gentleman not only never uses, but particularly dislikes — got up, pretty red in the face, and stammering out: "Oh — why — ah — how d'ye do —?" in a rather comical surprise and discomfiture. It was not easy for him to adjust either his look or temper to so sudden a change of attitude; for even the indignant chivalry of Kentucky could scarcely return this innocent, jolly, kind

greeting by proclaiming: "Sir, your friend yonder — who is apparently paying for your luncheon — has been making himself stupidly offensive to this lady, my guest; and I therefore propose at my convenience to punch his head for him!" Indeed, it would be interesting to know exactly what line of conduct the treatises on etiquette would recommend for such an occasion; seldom have I beheld J. B. so flustered. "Oh — ah — Major —" he said again disjointedly, and shook the other's hand like an automaton. "No — I — I didn't see you — I didn't know you were here —"

And in another half-minute, to my amused astonishment, there was J. B. being introduced to the whole pack of them, as if no meeting could have been more timely and desirable — hail-fellow-well-met, hands-all-around! "Mr. Philip Cortwright, a young friend of mine. . . ." This was the blond and good-looking lady-killer, who went through the presentation with entire ease, although J. B. contrived to make his own nod emphatically cool, distant, and non-committal, I thought; but no amount of snubbing seemed likely to take effect on this cavalier's metallic equanimity. ". . . and my nephew, Van Cleve Kendrick, Mr. Taylor, and this is a chum of his, Bob Gilbert. Boys, this is Mr. Breckinridge-Taylor that you hear me talk about so much — you know all about Mr. Breckinridge-Taylor, don't you, Van? Often heard me mention him, hey?"

"Why, no, not that I remember," blundered out the youth, honestly; and then crimsoned all over his face and his liberal-sized ears at the terrific breach of manners he saw too late he had committed; the other boy, the Gilbert one, jogged him in the ribs; it was an appalling moment for both of them; but, fortunately, went unnoticed by every one except myself, I believe, in the sort of friendly hullabaloo their sponsor was so busily creating. He was a slender,

flourishing gentleman, considerably older than any of the rest of us, with amiable blue eyes, and fine aquiline features; and gray hair and mustachios both worn quite full, long, and flowing, in a taste one does not often see nowadays; and with, furthermore, a long, flapping frock-coat held in by one button below the waist-line, and a waistcoat cut down low to show a great expanse of shirt-front and a black string-tie — all of which, taken with his military title, immediately and powerfully suggested blue-grass, mint-juleps, blooded horses, Uncle Tom, and, in short, all the other hall-marks of that fine old State from which, as I have just explained, J. B. B.-Taylor himself hailed. So when the latter presently came back to our table and sat down again, having separated from his new friends on the best of terms, although still with a somewhat cloudy, puzzled, and dissatisfied expression, I said harmlessly, "You know Colonel Carter of Cartersville, it seems?" The book was recently out and being read by everybody; and that was what I had privately christened the gray mustache instantly upon seeing him, so pronounced was his type.

"Hey? Oh, you mean *him*?" said J. B.; "yes, I know him — he's a Major Van Cleve. But he's not a Southern man. I don't know why it is," J. B. went on touchily; "every time anybody up here sees a man with a Prince Albert coat and a slouch hat and his hair a little long, they begin right away on the Suwanee River and the Lost Cause and all the rest of it. They think these stage Southerners are the real thing. Why, you heard him call me Breckinridge-Taylor, didn't you? That ought to have given him away. Can you imagine any man born South calling a fellow-creature's name that way? *Breckinridge-Taylor!*" ejaculated J. B. in implacable disgust; "anybody that tried to get that off down in Bourbon County would get lynched!"

"You *know* he looks Southern," I said acutely ; "why do you resent it so ? Is it because you don't like him ? If you liked him, he might look as if he came from Texas or Tien-Tsin, you wouldn't care."

He got red again, and said I was just like all the rest of the women, and made up my mind to something without any reason for it " . . . right off the bat, and then no power on earth can ever make you change it ! I don't know that I like or dislike old Van Cleve, and it would be ridiculous for me to resent anything about him. As to where he comes from, it's neither one of those places you mention, although," said J. B. a little dryly, "I don't believe they'd consider themselves particularly unlucky to have lost him. He comes from somewhere up in your own State, Chillicothe or Lancaster, or — or New Skeeterville, Sorghum County. And he got his title in the Civil War, when he enlisted in the Ninety-nine-Hundred-and-Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. Is it possible that you have never heard of that regiment ? Such is Fame !" J. B. concluded with an ironic sigh ; indeed, he had delivered this whole speech in a style of sour humor entirely foreign to him, having plainly been very much ruffled by the late occurrences. And it was odd and pleasing to see how quickly he regretted this display of irritation. "I don't know much about old Van Cleve. I really oughtn't to say anything. I don't want to give you a wrong impression," he added precipitately, anxious and contrite.

"How on earth did you come to know him ?" I could not forbear asking.

"Why, met him first down in Florida — Palatka, Florida. My father had an interest in an orange grove down there at one time, and we spent a winter there once — oh, it must be ten or fifteen years ago now. The Van Cleves, that is, the Major and his people, he's got a whole houseful of women

relatives, sisters or something, I don't remember much about them — anyhow, they owned the grove next to ours. I think they lived there a year or two. Then the Major went broke — frost knocked out the oranges, I suppose — I've a vague recollection of hearing about it. That sort of thing is all the time happening in Florida. They sold out and moved away. I've run across Van Cleve every now and then since, and he always remembers me. I don't know what he does; they have some little property, I believe. One of those boys is his nephew, he told me just now. Your goo-goo-eyed friend isn't any relation, I think." J. B. brushed the crumbs at the side of his plate into a minute heap, and scowled at it pensively. "You see, it's the merest acquaintance," he ended.

All this conversation we had conducted in a properly subdued fashion; nevertheless, I was sure that the other table knew we were talking about them, and sure, moreover, that they were talking about us. The Major was asking questions; the boys were explaining something. But now their party began to break up; that is, the blond Mr. Cortwright arose and took his leave of the rest, excusing himself on account of a "business engagement," as I overheard him elaborately announcing, and he went off without further notice of us or of my friend's final glare. Presently thereafter, Major Van Cleve, having held some kind of conference with his two boys, himself got up and came over towards us with sundry interrogative and semi-apologetic glances and hemmings and hawings directed at J. B.

"Er — ah — one moment — if you'll pardon me, Mr. Taylor — ?"

My friend rose in his turn with a wondering look, and I began to think that the Major might just possibly be "broke" once again and seeking a loan, in which case I had better be gazing out of the window and temporarily deaf. No such thing. What Mr. or

Major Van Cleve wanted, of all things in this world, was to meet *me*! "I couldn't get out of it," J. B. said to me afterwards; "when he said he had a letter of introduction to you, you know —?"

"The fact is, madame," the Major explained with his amiable flourish; "when my young friend, Robert Gilbert here, divulged the fact that he not only knew you, but had often met you — in *church*, I presume, of course, hey, Robert —?" here he executed a prodigiously playful diabolic wink at the young fellow, who colored and fidgeted and ended by grinning at me in an exceedingly taking way, honest, bashful, and humorous — "I say when my young gentleman said he knew you," repeated the Major; "the name caught my attention, and after a question or two I decided you must be the lady we were recommended to — meaning my sister's family and myself, madame — by a mutual acquaintance. I have her letter here, I believe —" and forthwith he searched out the document from his pockets, letter-case, and so on with rather impressive gestures and presented it to me ceremoniously. "I meant to have called, of course, and still hope to be allowed to give myself that pleasure. But no time like the present, you know! Especially as I observed we had another mutual acquaintance in Mr. Breckinridge-Taylor," says Major Van Cleve, smiling jovially upon J. B. I was about to answer with some ordinary civil speech, when the Gilbert boy, who had had the air of waiting anxiously and uncomfortably to account for himself, struck in abruptly in his frank, rough, boyish voice.

"I — I didn't say I knew you — not exactly that way, I mean," he blurted out, casting a worried look at the older gentleman's suave countenance. "You don't know anything about *me*, I don't believe, but I'm Professor Gilbert's son — at the University, you know. You know my mother and Lorrie — my sister

Lorrie, you know *her* —?" And, sure enough, on this hint, I recalled certain glimpses I had had of some youth's long, gangling legs and tousled head and muddy boots and glaring striped blazer jacket vanishing in a panic of shyness or annoyance from the hammock on the porch or the sway-bottomed lounge in the parlor at the sound of my entrance when I went to call on Mrs. and Miss Gilbert; so unquestionably I should have recognized Mr. Robert from the first. However, he was very far from feeling any resentment about it. "I didn't say I *knew* you — not *that* way, that is, you know —" he murmured over again, plainly much troubled at the suggestion.

We all sat down once more, Major Van Cleve accepting an invitation to join our table very pleasantly, though both of his young companions would undoubtedly have been glad to escape, if either could have devised a proper-sounding excuse. The Major, who seemed, for his part, to be a ready, fluent person of ample social experience and able to keep an easy countenance on almost any occasion, laughingly said that these introductions reminded him a little of an incident in the life of his grandfather which he had often heard the old gentleman relate, when he was presented at a ball in some private house in Philadelphia to President and Mrs. Washington. ". . . He was a very young man at the time, and naturally quite overcome in the presence of all the great people, and when he was taken up to make his bow before Lady Washington (that's what they called her, you know) the best he could do was to stutter, 'I — I'm sure you're vastly honored to meet me, Lady Washington!' getting his speech end for end, as you see, in the most ludicrous way. My grandfather used to say he never could forget the beautiful courtesy with which she passed it over, saying, 'Thank you, Mr. Van Cleve,' without the suspicion of a smile. But he said the

President heard the whole thing and burst out laughing so that everybody in the room stared. It was a very unusual thing for Washington to laugh, you know — he wasn't at all a humorous man. Afterwards, however, when my grandfather got to knowing them intimately, they often used to laugh together over that first meeting. When I was a little fellow, I could sometimes coax the old gentleman to talk about those days," the Major finished with a look of amused and tender retrospection.

"Your grandfather must have had some very interesting experiences," I said after a short silence, during which nobody else seemed disposed to make talk. J. B. had visibly adopted the normal American man's attitude of letting the women attend to the conversation, and the two lads had subsided into thankful dumbness.

"Yes, oh, yes. And by the way, he used to say that the cherry-tree-and-little-hatchet story, contrary to our enlightened popular view nowadays, was perfectly true," said Major Van Cleve; "he had it from Lady Washington's own lips. 'Only, you know, Stan,' she said to him (his name was Stanton, the same as mine, madame), 'his father didn't let George off that way at all. He gave him a fearful caning; and I think that's the reason the General doesn't like to have that story repeated to this day. It puts them both in such a bad light, anyhow.'"

J. B. said, "Ah?"; and after another pause, "Mr. Cortwright a friend of yours?" he inquired irrelevantly.

The Major coughed. "Well — er — *ahem* — we — we've known him some time —" he began to say, hesitating ever so slightly; and for half an instant I thought a kind of indecision showed in his mild blue gaze, as if he scented hostile opinion, and was uncertain whether the best policy was to placate or join



with it. But the nephew interrupted him; broke in pretty rudely, in fact.

"No," he said squarely to J. B. "No, he's no particular friend. He works in the same office I do, that's all, — Steinberger & Hirsch, Brokers, Walnut Street, just off of Third."

"I know that firm," said my friend; and he looked at Mr. Van Cleve Kendrick with some slight interest, thinking perhaps — as I myself was thinking — that the boy was young to be working anywhere, and also that his manner, if plain and straightforward, was still, somehow or other, not wholly agreeable. He had nothing of his uncle's gentle and friendly disposition, that was easily seen; and I doubted whether it would ever be possible for him to learn any such tact and regard for conventions.

"Cortwright's *my* friend, though," said the other boy, eagerly — even a little defensively; but then the Major intervened, steering the talk away from what he apparently felt to be a risky subject with admirable adroitness.

"Brokerage is a very remunerative business, I make no doubt. At least Van's employers have the name of being money-makers; isn't that so, Mr. Taylor?" he said. "These brokers and bankers!" He shook his head and gave a short, humorous sigh. "Well, well, I might have been one, too, I suppose, but it wasn't ordained that I should ever *accumulate*! Just about the time I would have been going into business, the War came on, and of course that settled it for *me*." He addressed me. "You can't imagine — you're far too young to remember — what kind of times those were for boys, madame."

"I thought you were a Southerner when I first saw you," I told him.

"Yes, a good many people take me for one. We old army fellows all get to looking alike, I

believe. And for that matter there was mighty little difference between us at the time — mighty little. We were just two sets of American boys out for a good time — just American boys!" declared Major Van Cleve with fervor. "Why, madame, just for an illustration, I remember something that occurred in my own personal experience down in Tennessee, not long before Chickamauga. I was detailed to take some men and destroy a railroad bridge and a few hundred yards of ties and rails in the rebel territory just outside our lines. The object was to cut their communications, you understand, of course —?"

We all did understand, of course, and the Major went on:—

"They called for volunteers, appearing to think the enterprise rather risky. I couldn't see it that way," said the military gentleman with some contempt; "I thought it was a good deal of a lark. And we *did* have a lark — never had so much fun in my life! Pretty near the whole regiment volunteered, but they picked out the biggest, strongest, strappingest fellows, of course — no joke tearing up ties and rails, you know. There wasn't one of us under six feet, and we were all athletes — *athletes* and hard as nails. We had a little wheezy old engine and tender and some kind of ramshackle caboose tacked on behind; and we got to the place and got through the job without much annoyance — half a dozen or so Confederates potting at us from a hill about an eighth of a mile off, but nothing else to speak of. They weren't strong enough to attack. But by the time we started to go back, they'd got a reënforcement from somewhere, and were smart enough to line up on both sides of the track so as to get a good crack as we went by. Could hardly miss at that distance, you know, especially as our train wasn't exactly a lightning-express — and they were pretty close together, too, let me tell you. We had a

nigger engineer and fireman that we'd shanghied into going, but of course the minute the bullets began to sing, those darkies just collapsed on the floor of the cab. I swear you couldn't have made a rag-carpet any flatter; we boys got so full of laugh we couldn't sight our guns. One of us, a little wiry, active runt, not much bigger than a twelve-year-old boy, crawled over the tender into the cab and opened up the throttle, and — and your humble servant volunteered to stoke," said the Major, looking correspondingly modest; "so we got through somehow, though it was tolerably hot for a while. But what I was going to say, madame, to illustrate the real good feeling in the ranks on both sides, after we'd run through 'em into comparative safety, we looked back, and there were the gallant fellows cheering and waving their hats at us! They had done their best to get us, but they were just as glad we escaped as we were! We had one or two wounded, — nothing serious, — but poor Alf Harper, the little fellow that took the engineer's place, dropped dead in the bottom of the cab, after it was all over. We thought he'd been shot, but there wasn't a mark on him. Excitement, the surgeons said, pure excitement! Singular, wasn't it? He wasn't a strong man, anyway, and simply couldn't stand the strain."

"He was one of the athletes, I suppose," murmured J. B., mildly.

I do not know whether the Major heard this observation; he kept on talking in his lively and companionable way. But young Kendrick, his nephew, gave us all a quick look, and turned red in a distressing fashion, and hung down his head, fingering the tablecloth. All at once I felt myself liking the poor young cub better, manners or no manners; and thoroughly understood now why it was that my friend J. B. did not seem to fancy much Major Stanton Van Cleve.

## CHAPTER II

### CONTAINS SOME SLIGHT MEMOIR OF A RESPECTABLE FAMILY

SOME few years back at about that date in our national history when Mr. Nast was drawing cartoons about the Tweed Ring; when every stray child was suspected of being Charley Ross; when Goldsmith Maid held the trotting record; when the youthful Miss Mary Anderson was essaying "Juliet" and "Parthenia"; when ladies wore pull-backs and waterfalls, and men made the landscape glad with the spectacle of flowing side-whiskers, low-necked waistcoats, and diamond shirt-studs — briefly, about the years 1872 or '73, two very handsome weddings took place in the high circles of a certain Ohio city, to both of which the fashionable columns in all the local papers of the day refer in the richest terms. You may read therein that Miss Helen Van Cleve was united in marriage to Mr. Harrison Glaive Kendrick at Christ Episcopal Church, six o'clock the evening of June fourteenth, in the presence of a brilliant gathering of friends and relatives; there were six bridesmaids and six groomsmen; the bride was given away by her brother, Major Stanton Van Cleve; her dress was a magnificent creation of white grosgrain with garniture of white velvet bows and white silk fringe, and she carried a bouquet of roses, white carnations, and maidenhair fern in a filigree gold holder (the gift of the groom), etc., etc. In the autumn of the same year the Van Cleve household furnished another and similar social sensation. This time,

according to the same reliable sources of information, Miss Myra Van Cleve was united in marriage to Mr. Richard Lucas, supported by an equal number of attendants, given away by the same military hero, dressed and decorated with identical elegance. There is a photograph yet in existence of the two pretty young women taken together in their wedding finery, the grosgains made alike, with duplicate bouquets, monstrous, mathematically circular, the roses and carnations packed tight within frills of lace paper; they smile from out their white illusion and orange-blossoms, happy and satisfied, and each one, without a doubt, serenely convinced of the excellence of her own choice, and wondering tolerantly in private at her sister's. The heart grows young again to see them.

The Van Cleve brides were twins and ten or twelve years younger than their brother Stanton, being all of them children of Joshua Van Cleve and his wife, who was one of the Zanes of Wheeling, a staunch old pioneer family. Joshua came out here from Philadelphia or Germantown somewhere about 1840, and went into the commission business, in which he amassed a considerable fortune; but he had been dead a good while at the time of these weddings. The widow was living in comfortable style in the large, double, brick house with the tall doors and windows and the Mansard roof that her husband built shortly after the war, during the course of which struggle Mr. Van Cleve had repeatedly foreseen and taken advantage of the fluctuations of the cotton, grain, and provision markets with admirable sagacity and fearlessness, and always to great profit. He did not enjoy his bricks and mortar and his Mansard roof very long; we brought nothing into the world with us, and it is certain we can take nothing away. Already five years after his death, the property he left exhibited a woful shrinkage; it is to be feared the Van Cleve heirs were a rather im-

practical, helpless set. An elderly gentleman of my acquaintance (Judge A. B. Lewis, in fact, a well-known figure on our bench whom most people will remember), long engaged in the legal profession and the management and winding-up of estates, who had had some experience with the family, delivered his opinion of them to me (on request) in pretty plain words. "The Van Cleves? Oh, yes, I know who you mean — know them all well," he said, stroking his chin, whereon he wore a pointed goatee of the classic American pattern; "we used to attend to a piece of property on South High for the widow — collected the rents for a number of years. No, they never lived in Columbus; but Mr. Van Cleve owned considerable real estate, I believe, all through this central section of the State, in one town or another. I used to see a good deal of him, at one time, and I've always kept track of the family — up to the last few years, that is. Now you say they've turned up down there with *you*? Van Cleve himself was a very solid sort of man — a hard worker — a man of force. It was a pity that fine property he'd got together was all dissipated so soon, although that's such a common occurrence people don't pay much attention to it. Of course you couldn't expect the Van Cleve women to know anything about taking care of their money; but there's a kind of a parsimonious streak in pretty nearly every woman — if you don't mind my saying so — and Mrs. Van Cleve and the girls would have probably held on to the estate longer, if it hadn't been for the son. I knew him, too, but I haven't seen him or any of 'em for five or six years. I think they've travelled about a good deal; every time they sold a piece of property, they'd make a move — go to Europe or somewhere. That's the kind they are, you know. You say you met Stanton the other day? He must be forty-five or fifty years old now. Yes, he was in the army, First Lieutenant in

the Nine-Hundred-and-Ninety-ninth — oh, yes, *that's* perfectly true. No, he never got any higher than that. Fact is, as I remember being told, Stanton never was in any engagement, somehow. He was always at home on furlough, or sick, or something, whenever there was any fighting going on. He was first called by that title of Major, I understand, when he was training boys in some military academy at Painesville or Sandusky up in that part of the country, after the War was over. I don't believe old Josh Van Cleve ever took much stock in his son Stanton; but he made him work; he was a pretty good hand at keeping everybody up to the mark. However, he died, in 'sixty-eight or along there, and then the Major came home to live, and I never heard of his doing a stroke of work afterwards. You say you saw him? Well, well! How was he looking? Seedy? They can't have much left by this time. That young Kendrick must be poor Helen's son. Did anybody say anything about Myra — Mrs. Lucas, I mean, you know? She was the other daughter."

Mrs. Helen Kendrick died within a year of her marriage, which was the reason my old friend spoke of her so pityingly. She left a baby of two months, whom they had had baptized by her family name, and whom her mother and sister took into their own keeping after the poor young wife's death. They all lived together for a while under that same paternal Mansard, in the amiable delusion that the several families each saved money thereby; though Heaven knows what queer, helter-skelter accounts they kept, or how heavily this economical arrangement bore on the widowed grandmother. Her husband's will left almost the entire property at her sole disposal, and she seems to have been a generous, high-handed sort of woman, the last person in the world to deny either herself or her children anything in reason — or out of it. It was also true that Stanton, being more or less of an invalid from

injuries received on the field of battle, as everybody knew or had heard (whatever Judge Lewis might say to the contrary), required this spacious home and congenial surroundings. There they all lived, then, Mrs. Van Cleve and Major Stanton, and the remaining daughter and the two sons-in-law, the whole tribe of them, to whom, in no great while after Master Van Cleve Kendrick's appearance, there was added another baby, a girl this time, little Evelyn Lucas — Evelyn being the somewhat rococo name her parents bestowed on her.

Then Lucas died. He had a weak heart and died with dreadful suddenness of sunstroke the hot summer of 'eighty-one. It would seem as if the Van Cleve house was one of mourning and tragedy and a pursuing Fate. Judge Lewis, for all he was so familiar with the Van Cleves, and with all the ins and outs of their relationships and affairs, could only speak in a very vague way about the two men whom the girls married; neither of them had what you might call good luck, he intimated. He had never heard anything against them; they were young fellows and had not had much chance to show what was in them (if anything). Kendrick got the gold-mining fever, and went out West to the Black Hills, where he contracted a lung trouble from exposure and the roughness of the life, from which he never recovered. He came back home, lingered in a decline for some months, and finally died at Cresson Springs, Pennsylvania, where they had taken him on one of those futile and pathetic journeys that consumptives are forever making up to the last moment of their lives in the hope of a cure.

The boy Van Cleve was perhaps eight years old at the time of his Uncle Lucas's death. He remembered indistinctly the shock of the tidings, and people hurrying to and fro, and the grewsome black-clad figures of the women moving about the house, which was in an



appalling darkness with all the blinds down at broad midday, and a wild wailing and noise going on interminably in his aunt's room. He remembered standing on a chair in the nursery where both the children had been incarcerated and peeping through a crack between the closed shutters and seeing a great concourse of carriages in the street and persons who were evidently attired as for Sunday entering the house — all of which reminding him of certain festivities which he had also witnessed from afar, he reported to the baby Evelyn that there was a "die-party" in progress and remonstrated with the horrified nurse for not letting them both go. It was not more than a year after this that Van — as in later life he could recall clearly enough, but without any sentiment whatever, for he was not a youth of easy emotions — found himself being gravely taken in to see a gaunt man with a flushed face and great glassy eyes, who lay in bed, and put out one fevered claw of a hand and held the little boy by the shoulder, and told him feebly to be a good boy — to be good to Grandma and Aunt Myra and little Evelyn, and take care of them — would he do that? Would he promise to do that?

"Yes, sir. All right. I meant to anyhow," Van said in a cheerful and practical voice. "When I'm big enough," he added prudently.

"Do you know who I am?" the other asked.

"No," said the boy, who was of an honest spirit.

"He was only four when you went West, Harry," cried out his grandmother, anxiously; "we've talked about you — we've told him about you — indeed we have. But the child's too little — he can't remember. It's Papa, Van, you know *Papa*, dearie?"

"Never mind. When I get well, I'll stay at home with you, and we'll get to knowing each other, sonny," said the sick man. Van Cleve wondered why the two women hustled him out of the room so quickly, and

cried so over him in the hall, outside the closed door.

There followed upon this sad event a period of journeyings about and kaleidoscopic changes of scene which must have lasted ten years and upwards. Soon after Mr. Kendrick's death, the Van Cleve family sold a lot they owned on South High Street in the capital city with a five-story building and some small stores on it — it was that very piece, in fact, which the Lewis firm of attorneys used to look after — and bought an orange grove down near Palatka, Florida, where they all emigrated, and lived for a matter of eighteen months. Little Van heard a great deal of glowing talk about soil and climate and the dignity and ease of rural life upon one's own "broad acres beside some clear, sparkling mountain stream, or within view of the majestic ocean's proudly swelling tide," to quote his Uncle Stanton, who was not particularly strong on geography — or not nearly so strong as he was on rhetoric, at any rate. "Our golden orchards will yield us golden returns," the Major observed poetically. Sad to relate, nothing of the kind happened; or, at least, prosperity such as Major Stanton indicated was too tardy in arriving to suit these speculators. They returned, denouncing the unfortunate State of Florida high and low. Climate — pooh! It was as cold as Nova Zembla, with no furnaces in the wretched frame shanties of houses, not even a decent fireplace. Soil — fiddle-de-dee! You had to plough and weed and work like a slave, or nothing would grow. The orange trees were full of scale, of blight, of the ten plagues of Egypt — you couldn't get servants for love nor money — it was three miles from the post-office — they found a snake under the front porch —! "Of course a man doesn't mind roughing it — even a man with a bullet in him that's been giving him occasional pretty severe reminders of its presence for twenty years," said the

Major with a deprecating smile; "but I couldn't ask the ladies to put up with the hardships of that life, though they spring of such a noble old pioneer stock." To their surprise and consternation and great wrath the Van Cleves found serious trouble in disposing of the Palatka grove — which caused the ladies, Mrs. Van Cleve and Mrs. Lucas, to go about crying out with even more vehemence against the folly of Florida investments! One can scarcely blame them; they recovered only a lamentably small proportion of the money they had put into this venture. The last of the land was sold for taxes ten years or so ago to a man who has since made a fortune off of it in string-beans, as I understand.

After this Mrs. Van Cleve sold the big old Mansard-roof home for twelve thousand dollars (a good deal less than it had cost) and with this sum bought an untold number of shares in the Cincinnati, Paducah & Wheeling Steam-Packet Company, which had been a flourishing concern before and during the 'sixties, when Joshua Van Cleve himself had for a while been interested in it; he sold out on observing the increasing activity of railroad traffic in this section of the country. The Ohio River had ceased to be that "highway of commerce, of wealth, travel, and industry" which Stanton called it, by the time the widow came to invest in the C. P. & W. Packet Company, which, to tell the truth, was already on its last legs; and shortly thereafter it tottered over altogether — the steam-packets figuratively blew up — went to pieces — sank, carrying along with them poor Mrs. Joshua's twelve thousand. What with receiverships, injunctions, suits of one kind and another, the echoes of the catastrophe lingered in our courts for years. The Van Cleves, however, were not among the litigants; they never had the means to press their claims, even had it been worth while.

Perhaps these two samples of the Van Cleve style of

business management will serve to justify Judge Lewis's pronouncements on the family. He was wrong in one particular; they never did "sell something and go to Europe"; the poor things were not knowingly extravagant or self-indulgent. Rothschild, Astor, Shylock himself, could not have fixed a more serious eye upon the main chance, or expected a dollar to go farther. But as long as there was anything left to buy with, Mrs. Van Cleve and her children were buying and scheming and failing and selling out at a heart-rending sacrifice. They tried oil lands in Texas, mica mines in Georgia, granite quarries in Maine, lots and "corners" in half a dozen different cities — there was nothing they did not try. Sometimes they went and lived in the locality of their wild-goose purchases; sometimes they tried to direct at a distance — in either case with the same disastrous results. Conditions, wherever the Van Cleves went, and whatever they did, were somehow invariably adverse; the air was all wrong, the water was all wrong, the society was all wrong, for the older members of the family; the schools were all wrong for the youngsters. Circumstances, in short, contrived always to be so overwhelmingly wrong after they had lived in one place for six months, that a change was imperative, and it was amazing to see the confidence, the happy expectation, with which they looked forward to the next move. A few such experiences would have made pessimists of most of us.

Master Van Cleve Kendrick, therefore, began at an unusually early age to see the world, and acquired his education in an extensive variety of places and ways. They were in Florida when he learned his letters and read his first book, "Robinson Crusoe"; and where, whatever his seniors may have suffered, Van, for his part, had a happy time fishing and wading and playing in the sand and scrub, and getting himself infested with "chiggers," to the fright and misery of the rest of

the family. He had a year of school in Pittsburgh (this must have been during the C. P. & W. episode) and after that a year in New Orleans, and another year divided between Boston and Bangor, carrying it off pretty well as a scholar, on the whole, in all these places; he was not a dull boy, and showed, moreover, an eminently plain, sane, reliable temperament. His teachers unanimously reported that if he had a special turn, it was for figures — news which the elder Van Cleves received with pride and gratification, but no surprise, though any outsider might have supposed a taste for arithmetic to be rather unusual with them; they considered it, however, an outcropping of a well-established family trait! Some of Van's other characteristics were not so familiar, and occasioned the others much amazement and speculation. Once (when they were in Baltimore, when the boy was about eleven years old) Major Van Cleve, having given his nephew an odd penny or two, observed with a humorous curiosity that the young gentleman deposited these coins carefully in a little tin bank that somebody had presented to him, the key whereof he carried in a pocket of his small breeches, securing his property with a sedate air and complete absence of any sort of affectation.

"What's that you're doing, Van?" his uncle asked.

"Putting it away," said Van, tranquilly, looking about for his cap and a certain new baseball bat with which he proposed to try conclusions in that day's game after school hours.

"*Putting it away!* Don't you want to spend it?" said the Major, astounded at the novelty and originality of this conception.

"No, sir. I've got some money. I've got a dime. I don't need any more right now," Van Cleve explained; and perhaps seeing doubt on the other's face, he dug his sturdy little grimy fist down into the pocket again,

and pulled out the coin, and showed it, still in his matter-of-fact style.

"Do you put all your money away?" his uncle inquired, winking over the boy's head at the grandmother and aunt, sitting by with interested looks; and Mrs. Lucas signalled to little Evelyn, who was playing noisily with her dolls in the corner (she was a noisy and restless child), to keep quiet so that they could hear these revelations.

"No, sir," said Van again, unembarrassed. "I always put away some, though."

"How much have you got?"

Van Cleve considered, wrinkling his brows. "I don't know whether it's a dollar-forty-five, or a dollar-fifty-five," he announced at length; "I'd have to count it. But I guess it's only a dollar-forty-five, because it's always littler than you think it is. I mean to get a book and put it down, so I'll always know, without having to count every time."

"What are you going to do with it? Aren't you going to spend it sometime?"

"I don't know — maybe. Maybe I'll just save it," said the youngster, beginning to fidget a little under the concentrated attention of his superiors.

The others exchanged a glance again. "You mustn't be a miser, you know, Van Cleve," said his Aunt Myra in her clear and sweetly dictatorial voice; "misers are *horrid!*" And, although the habit of saving some part of one's money does not of necessity lead to miserliness according to most persons' view, the family were all more or less relieved when later on Van expended almost his whole capital on an outfit of second-hand fishing tackle, and presently had nothing left to show for it — like any normal, ordinary boy.

Yet, as young Kendrick grew up, amongst other alien and puzzling traits, the most pronounced, which he every now and then displayed anew, was this same

unaccountable tendency to thrift. The lad did not, indeed, seem to possess much aptitude for earning money; he was as prone to absurd planning and dreaming, as lazy and industrious by turns, as enthusiastic and despondent in fits and starts, as the average boy; and played and studied with like alternations of energy and indifference. "But Van Cleve is sure always to have *some* money. He's never clean out!" the Major used to remark with indulgent laughter; "and he never will let any of us keep it or take care of it for him. No, sir! Van's his own banker. He reminds me of an ancestor of ours — an uncle of my father's, in fact, who, being a man of known wealth, was advised by Benjamin Franklin (an intimate friend) to put his money in a bank, instead of keeping it in hogsheads of Spanish gold dollars in the cellar, which was the old fellow's habit. 'Some day they'll murder thee for that money, Marcus,' says Franklin; 'thee should put it into a bank.' 'Well, when I'm dead, I shan't need it,' says Uncle Mark; 'and I'd as lief the murderers had it as the bank! There's small choice in rotten apples' — ha, ha! Quaint old chap, wasn't he?" Major Van Cleve would finish, looking around upon the company to whom he had retailed this anecdote in his usual pleasantly dramatic fashion. Van Cleve used to hang his head, and wriggle on his seat, and fiddle with his big, overgrown, sunburned hands, while the stories were going forward. He had heard about Benjamin Franklin and the hogsheads of gold dollars many times — to say nothing of a score of other yarns the Major was accustomed to tell. Van thought they were not very funny, nor very bright; he did not believe them; he did not see how anybody could believe them. Between family loyalty and the dread of ridicule he writhed in the depths of his boyish soul, and wished the floor would open and let him through. Which of us that are humane and have been

young does not share that feeling? Verily I think I should rather make a fool of myself (a feat which I perform with facility and unconsciousness) than see my brother do it!

Van Cleve had reached eighteen when, during a summer spent at Put-in-Bay on Lake Erie, his family became acquainted with that of Professor Samuel Gilbert, one of whose household made his bow to us in the last chapter. Mr. Robert Gilbert was near Van Kendrick's own age, and they speedily contracted one of those heroic, splendidly unselfish, time-and-death-defying friendships into which young gentlemen at this stage sometimes enter. To the credit of mankind, those friendships do often endure, and there is nothing more amiable and comforting in life than the spectacle. Bless me, I remember seeing these two, fifteen years later, when they were grown men who had known cares and tragedy and bitter hours of misunderstanding — I remember seeing them engaged in an informal game of ball in the blazing sun at some picnic or club-outing, and — "Say, let Van have a bat, you fellows! He's been chasing your flies out there in the scrub for an hour. Let Van come in and bat once!" Bob cried out warmly and imperatively. So they let Van come in and bat, and Bob took his place in the scrub, and the two friends merely exchanged a nod and grin as they passed each other; they would have been astonished and abashed to have been told that there was anything beautiful in the incident, yet so it seemed to one onlooker, at least.

It was after that long, lovely summer season of swimming and rowing and idling about; and reading "The Count of Monte Cristo," and the adventures of Mr. Huckleberry Finn, and "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and sundry other gallant classics; and dreaming glorious dreams, and spinning happy, impossible futures for both of them with his boy companion, that



Van Cleve, upon returning home (they were living in St. Louis at the time), announced his desire to go to college — everybody went to college — Bob was going to college — Van Cleve would go, too — he knew he could get ready — maybe he would be *conditioned*, as they called it, but he would get *in*, anyhow — he was way up in mathematics, and that was what counted most, Bob said — and he could make up the languages and the — the other things easily, oh, *easily*. Couldn't we afford it? He wanted to go to Bob's college — that wasn't a very expensive place, you know. The family agreed readily; Major Stanton commended his nephew's ambition; they were all very proud and fond of Van; and moreover, by a neat coincidence, Mrs. Van Cleve was upon the point of selling that old farm up in Union County that they had owned all these years, and never got a cent out of, for forty-five hundred dollars, part of which money could not be better employed than upon her grandson's education. It was all delightedly settled around the reading lamp in the library one evening; and the next day, Mrs. Lucas hurried down town to secure a set of book shelves and a wicker lounge she had noticed in one of the shop windows, which would be just the thing for Van Cleve's college room.

Well-a-day, it must be told! All this pretty scheme came to naught. Van Cleve did not go to college that year, nor any other year; he never lounged on the campus, nor cut chapel of a winter's morning, nor strummed on a banjo with the Glee Club, nor shouted his young lungs out around the football field, nor got his degree *magna cum laude*, and marched down from the platform with the tassel of his mortar-board over the honorable ear that signifies graduation and the close of the scholastic career. Without any of these agreeable preliminaries and with a sad suddenness, the young fellow came to the sign-post on his road marked,

"This way to LIFE," and if he did not reach manhood in a night, at least he took a long step in that direction. That wretched old Union County farm, which had always been a nuisance, now, at what you might call its final hour, when it was as good as sold, and everybody — in a figure of speech — had pen in hand to sign the deeds, all at once developed new powers of annoyance; it is not too much to say that in the minds of Mrs. Van Cleve and her daughter it took on a malignant, a diabolic personality. For the first time in the history of the family sales, the lawyers on the other side raised some objection to the title. The *title*, of all things! "It was good enough for my husband, and it ought to be good enough for these people," said Mrs. Van Cleve in majestic indignation; "Mr. Van Cleve was a very careful man — a remarkable man; he never would have bought a defective title. I have managed my property for twenty-two years, and I *think* I can lay claim to *some* knowledge of business, and I never had a title disputed before."

But it appeared that the attorneys were casting no reflections on anybody's integrity or abilities, as they respectfully pointed out. They had wished to see Mr. Van Cleve's will — a not unusual request — and according to the terms of it they were inclined to the opinion that, etc., etc. Mrs. Helen Van Cleve Kendrick had died in February, 187—, they understood — yes? — and Mr. Kendrick at such and such a date? He would have had no more than a one-third interest, at any rate, it was probable, which would of course cease and determine immediately upon his death. The boy was still a minor, but, etc., etc. Their civil accuracy frightened the widow, domineering and self-reliant as she was; terrifying doubts of her own position for the first time in her life assailed her. Stanton looked profound, but, understanding absolutely nothing of what was being said, for once kept silence. He had no stories that

would fit the occasion. Mrs. Lucas, with not much clearer vision, was bewildered, and helplessly angry. They all three came back from the legal offices very much excited and perturbed, and all talking at once in their high-pitched, vehement way which would have alarmed any one but Van Cleve, who was used to it.

"Pooh, they haven't got a case — they can't do anything! They haven't got a case, I tell you!" cried the Major, stroking his side-whiskers with large, contemptuous gestures, and looking very fierce and military; "don't be alarmed, Mother. These fellows are mere shysters."

"Oh, Stanton, it isn't a *case* — there isn't going to be any lawsuit — can't you *see*?" both of the women wailed in concert; "they don't want to go to law about anything — it isn't *that*, at all! It's just that we didn't know all these years — how *could* we, when nobody told us — I don't see why they didn't find it out before — all the buying and selling we've done! — maybe it isn't true anyhow —" they questioned each other, in a frenzy of worry.

"What on earth's the matter? Can't you sell the old land? Don't they want to buy it after all?" asked the boy, aroused to curiosity at last; "won't somebody else buy it? What on earth's up?"

"Oh, Van, my dear boy, I — I'm afraid we oughtn't to have tried to sell it at all — I'm afraid we oughtn't ever to have sold anything!" Mrs. Van Cleve began; and fairly burst out sobbing, to the youth's horror and distress as she put her arms around his neck. He was growing fast this last year, and had shot up to be a head above her; the thought that he was almost a man in some indescribable way at once startled and consoled the grandmother. She tried to explain brokenly: "The lawyer — that Mr. Fogson, you know — wanted to read your grandfather's will, and he said

something about it having v-virtually created a tr-trust for you — for your mother's share, you know, my dear — poor Nellie's share — and — and I *can't* understand it — I don't see why somebody didn't find it out before — but I'm af-fraid we've used your property — your money, Van ; I'm afraid we've spent what you ought to have h-had !” She looked into the boy's face, the tears streaming down her own. Every one looked at him ; and there was a silence in the room.

“My share ? My mother's share, I mean ?” said Van Cleve, perplexed, but not much upset otherwise ; he had seen the family get into states of excitement such as this before, over matters no more weighty than dismissing the cook, or laying a new carpet, so was not disposed to take it very seriously.

“We didn't mean to, Van — we didn't know we hadn't any right to it !” cried his aunt, hysterically.

“Well, how about Evelyn's ?” Van inquired. “Oh, I see,” he added quickly ; “Aunt Myra's being alive makes a difference, I suppose. Evelyn couldn't inherit until her mother's dead, anyhow.”

“*Van Cleve!* How *can* you ? *How* can you talk about my being dead that way ?” Mrs. Lucas almost screamed ; “don't you care if I die ? Don't you *care* if I die ?” She, too, broke into tears and sobs of sheer fright at the idea.

“I didn't say that !” said Van Cleve, helplessly ; “I only wanted to get the straight of it, Aunt Myra. I don't want you to die. Nobody wants you to die.”

“We didn't mean to wrong you, Van, my dear, darling boy. You know I love you like a mother, you *know* that, don't you ?” his aunt gasped out between sobs ; “you've had just as much good out of the property as anybody else, anyhow. We've always shared with you, haven't we ? Oh, say you forgive us, say you forgive us !” She cast herself on him with wild prayers.

"Well, but I don't know what's happened yet —" the boy began, not too patiently.

"Say you forgive us!" reiterated Mrs. Lucas with prodigious determination in the midst of her weeping.

"Don't get so excited, Myra," Major Stanton remonstrated; "you'll hurt yourself. You know excitement's not good for you."

"I'm *not* excited — I'm *not* excited," retorted the other in a tearful impatience. She attacked her nephew anew, at once pleading and imperative. "You do forgive us, Van, don't you?"

"All right. I forgive you!" said Van Cleve shortly, coloring at the words. Anything for peace, he thought in a species of resigned exasperation — and then wondered guiltily if there was not something wrong with him morally or mentally because his aunt's behavior seemed to him utterly foolish. He reminded himself with remorse that he had been warned repeatedly that Aunt Myra was very delicate and high-strung; and it was always perilous to contradict her. Everybody in the family was more or less delicate and high-strung, for that matter; Van had even heard himself so described, although he was uneasily conscious of being all the while in absolutely brutal health!

"I guess I'd better go down and see those lawyers myself, hadn't I?" he suggested, perceiving that it was useless to expect any more definite information from his elders, and judiciously selecting a moment when the scene had quieted down somewhat. And everybody agreeing with many expressions of wonder and satisfaction at the maturity of his judgment, young Kendrick did go down on the morrow and interviewed Messrs. Fogson and Dodd — not the true names, indeed, but they will serve, as this is the first and last appearance of that legal firm in this history, and Van never saw them again. Both attorneys smiled a little when the young fellow recited the family fears that he had been done out of his inheritance. Mrs. Van Cleve,

they said, had not precisely understood — they regretted exceedingly to have given her a false impression — of course it would not have been possible for her to alienate her grandson's property — anything like real estate, that is. Nevertheless, after a careful study of Mr. Van Cleve's will, they thought it not unlikely that confusion might arise at some future time from — er — from the fact that his daughter's, Mrs. Kendrick's, interest, which was certainly implied if not explicitly stated, had been apparently overlooked, etc., etc. They had no trouble with the boy; the questions he asked were clear-headed enough; and he listened to their explanations with more understanding and self-control than they had met with in any of the older members of the family, Messrs. Fogson and Dodd remarked to each other with some amusement, after Van had taken his leave. He himself came away not greatly cast down; he walked home slowly in a thoughtful mood, and as he went up the steps to the Van Cleve front door, and rang the bell, decided privately that he must have a latch-key.

His grandmother was alone in the sitting-room with a mass of documents spread out before her, and the little old wooden strong-box bound and fortified at its corners with brass, with "J. Van Cleve" outlined in brass nails on the lid, in which her husband had always kept his papers standing open alongside. She looked up at the lad, troubled and apprehensive. "Well, Van?" she said; and her hands trembled slightly amongst the old deeds and receipts and letters. "I — I think perhaps you ought to look these over. You — you're getting to an age when you ought really to know something about business — about our — our — affairs. I must begin and teach you."

"Yes. I guess it's time I took hold," said Van Cleve. He came and stood by her, smiling, as he looked down at the litter. "I used to think all the money came out of that box, when I was a boy," he said.

When he was a boy ! That was only yesterday, Mrs. Van Cleve thought, with a strange mixture of fear and pride and pain. Well, and why should he not be grown — be a man ? She was an old woman, she would be seventy her next birthday, and she had been only fifty-two when this grandson was born. "What did those men tell you, Van Cleve ?" she questioned him jealously ; "what have they been saying to you ? You know we — I never meant to use any money of yours, whatever they say."

"Oh, you couldn't, anyhow," said the young fellow, practically ; "that's safe enough."

"But I *wouldn't* — why — why, I *wouldn't!*" his grandmother cried out, grieved and indignant ; "I wouldn't *do* such a thing — !" she broke off abruptly, aghast at the sound of her own voice raised in futile protestations — for that they were futile, she could read in the kind indifference of the other's young face. She recognized in a sort of terror the same feeling that had so often possessed her in her Joshua's company ; she remembered Joshua's harsh tolerance, his half-answers, even that gesture of putting his hand in his pocket and that abstracted, "Well, how much d'ye want ?" which was many times the only notice her attempts at conversation got. It used to irritate her so ! And now this youngster — ! Desperately she made an effort to regain their familiar footing. "I suppose we'd — we'd better not talk any more about college, Van," she said, with a tightening of the throat ; in spite of her, the words came humbly. "I hate to have you disappointed, but —"

He was not listening to her ! But, at her second attempt, he roused himself. "Hey ? Oh, *college* — yes, I know," said Van Cleve, and patted her hand soothingly. "That's all right, Grandma, don't worry — it's all right. I haven't got any time for college, anyhow. I'm going to work."

## CHAPTER III

### SOME FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS

LATTERLY we have fallen into the habit of saying to one another that the city is getting so *big* with all its near and far suburbs, and the distances are so *impossible* (unless one has a motor), and there are so many *new* people, and everybody has so much to do, and one is *constantly meeting* at clubs and parties, *anyhow* — I say we have got into a way of telling ourselves that for all of these reasons the fashion of making calls is practically obsolete. But at the date when the Van Cleve family came here to live, this efficient catch-word had not yet come into vogue; people called on them, all the formalities were duly observed, and they began to be known and to go about in a surprisingly short time. I think all the ladies had a quite unusual social gift, setting aside the fact that they were well introduced and very well connected — the Zanes and Van Cleves, you know. Even Major Stanton, for all his unreliable reminiscences, was a man of distinguished presence, and good manners, — an agreeable enough addition to most companies. Young Kendrick was the only unornamental member of the family, and hardly anybody ever saw him; very likely he was grubbing down town in the grimy Third Street office all day and coming home at six o'clock in the evening, tired and hungry and short-tempered, hanging on a strap in the trolley-car along with the rest of the tired, the hungry, and short-tempered. A shabby, overgrown, and, on the whole, rather sulky and silent lout,



was the verdict passed upon Mr. Kendrick by most of the people — by all the women, in fact — who were privileged to meet him at this time. As to the gentleman's opinion of them, he probably never took the trouble to form one; during all this part of his career, Van's energies were strongly concentrated on his own affairs.

But the ladies! I remember the first time they appeared at Sunday morning service at All Saints' in our suburban parish of Elmhill, where they had taken a house somewhere on Summit or Riverview Avenue, so the Gilberts — with whom, it seemed, they were intimately acquainted — had told me. There was a tall, fine-looking old lady, Mrs. Van Cleve, presumably, with an erect carriage, dark hair thickly laced with silver, brilliant dark eyes, and a beautifully fresh complexion almost like a girl's, to whom the Major — correctly frock-coated, gloved, and high-hatted this time — carefully gave an arm up the aisle; to tell the truth, his mother looked much more capable of giving an arm to *him*, and indeed of generalling the whole congregation and church to the Reverend Mr. Babcock himself, for all her seventy-odd years! After her, there came a couple of much younger women — Mrs. and Miss Lucas, as it developed — both of them slender, tall, black-haired, bright-colored, repeating in the strangest incisive way the older one's effect of personal distinction. They were quietly dressed, their entrance was as unostentatious as any lady's should be; and we ourselves were no staring, provincial-minded audience; but had they been preceded by a herald and trumpets, they could scarcely have been more impressive. I recognized Van Cleve awkwardly bringing up the rear; but nobody else noticed him, even when he stumbled over the hassocks in their pew, and sat down with undue violence, reddening around to the back of his neck. He was figuratively nowhere

by the side of the imposing Major, and those three torch-like women.

It was after this that I bethought me, not without shame, of my own polite duties, — six weeks must have gone by since that meeting at the Saint Simon! — and in a day or so posted over to the Gilbert's for Lorrie's company and countenance, in a call upon the Van Cleve household. The Gilberts lived on Warwick Lane in a weatherbeaten old house — their means must have been very small; it was wonderful the way Lorrie and her mother managed — and young Mr. Robert himself opened the door to my ring. Instead of bolting off incontinently, as heretofore, at sight of the petticoats, he grinned and said, "Oh, how d'ye do?" in an affable and unconstrained manner; and ushered me into the big, battered parlor, explaining that Lorrie was out — she had just gone over to see one of the girls, and his mother busy with a seamstress upstairs, but if I'd wait awhile, they'd both be here, he thought. And he hospitably pulled forward an arm-chair, and offered me some home-made peach cordial out of the short, squab, cut-glass decanter that Mrs. Gilbert always kept — she was a Virginia woman — on the side-table by the dining-room door. It was pretty strong, high-flavored stuff, and doubtless there were members of All Saints' congregation who would have shaken their heads at the spectacle of the Professor's son drinking it, and at my countenancing him.

"Why, it's Summit Avenue, the house is on Summit Avenue, Number Eight — it's one of these two-houses-stuck-together places, under one roof, you know," he explained graphically, in answer to my question; "you can't miss it, anyhow. Isn't it funny, everybody calls 'em the Van Cleves, and yet it's just the old lady, Van's grandmother, and the Major that are named that. There's Mrs. Lucas besides, she's Van's aunt, and Evelyn, she's his cousin — she's about seventeen,

I think, and Van's own name's Kendrick, you know." He went on with some further details about the family; indeed, it was from young Gilbert that I learned no small part of that Van Cleve history which has already been set forth herein. Bob, who seemed now to feel himself on intimate terms with me, displayed a refreshing willingness to talk, joke, chatter, tell everything he knew in the obvious desire to be a civil and entertaining host, and being, moreover, by nature — as I judged him — open and talkative. The burden of his conversation was mostly *Van*, however — Van this and Van that; he told me all about their association at Put-in-Bay two or three summers before; how Van Cleve had wanted to go to college with him, and how something had happened, Bob didn't know what, — of course Van wouldn't say much, — but his friend suspected the funds gave out. Anyhow, Van went to work — got a job in a shoe factory over there in St. Louis at eight dollars a week. Didn't I think that was a fine thing to do? Didn't I think that was a *great* thing to do? Yet Bob was sure from little things he saw and heard when he was with them, you know, that Van's family had made the most awful fuss. A *shoe factory* — that's what got 'em! That's what they couldn't stand. As if that made any difference! It's what a man *is* that counts, it's not what he *does*, isn't that so? "I mean, as long as he does something honest, of course," the young fellow added hastily, fearing I might misunderstand the above highly original statement. "I think Van's pretty *big* — he's the *biggest* man I know!" declared Robert, roundly, his own fair, good-looking face flushed with enthusiasm and a little with the peach-brandy, no doubt, and his voice shaken by a generous excitement and pride. "Give me a chance, that's all! I'd show you how quick I'd do it!" he cried bravely. It was rather foolish and rather touching.

He went on without much prompting. "Hey? Why, yes, I think they have some money — yes, Van as much as told me that himself. But it's not enough without him working — Major Van Cleve doesn't do a thing, you know. Anyway, Van wants his *own* money — why, *any* man does. Van's not going to sit around and ask his grandmother for it — I wouldn't, either," said Robert, loftily. "Van Cleve just kept right on at the shoe factory, and let 'em fuss. He's awfully stern and — and *strong*, you know, when he wants to be." However, at about this time, it seemed they had moved to Lexington, and Van Cleve went right off and found another place — some kind of a place where he did some kind of office work in one of the Government bonded warehouses or distilleries, or whatever they are, Bob wasn't quite certain. They only stayed in Lexington a few months; and since they had been living here, Van Cleve had been working for those same people Phil Cortwright was with, but he didn't like it — he was going to leave them in September. No, Bob didn't know what it was that Van Cleve disliked about the brokers' office or business — he wouldn't be likely to tell anybody, even Bob. Van wasn't that sort — "He says I'm a regular sieve, anyhow!" Robert confessed, with a laugh.

"Has he got something else to do?"

"Oh, yes! Van wouldn't throw up any job unless he was sure of another. He's going into the National Loan and Savings — Mr. Gebhardt's bank, you know. He'll have a pretty good thing there, he thinks," Bob said with a large air. "At least, he told me he meant to *stick* this time. He says he's chopped and changed around enough; he's tired of it, and he's getting too old. He's right, too — he'll be twenty-one his next birthday. Funny thing about Van, he isn't the least bit swell-headed, you know, but he talks about sticking with the bank just as if nobody else had any say about

it — just as if he was perfectly dead sure of making good. And he will, too, you see!" said the friend, confidently.

I said quite truthfully that it had always seemed to me a formidable sort of undertaking to go and offer one's self and one's services to anybody; that I wondered how any man could ever get up the courage to do it. Young Mr. Gilbert heard me with gravely smiling tolerance.

"Well, of course, a *woman*, you know — ! Now between *men*, it's so different," he spoke with the wisdom of the ages. "But Van Kendrick — why, applying for the bank job, or any other job, wouldn't worry *him* any. He went right to Mr. Gebhardt. Mr. Gebhardt knows his people, anyhow; he knows Major Van Cleve —" and here Robert stopped short, struck, perhaps, by a certain idea of which he may have seen the reflection in my own face; for, our eyes meeting, he burst into a sudden guffaw of laughter. I am afraid I smiled, too. It was more than a little funny to think of Mr. Julius Gebhardt or any other hard-headed business man being favorably influenced by knowing Major Van Cleve.

"Has he been to see you yet?" the boy asked.

"Yes, but I was out. I'm going to call on the ladies to-day. I thought perhaps your sister might care to go with me."

"I'm sure she'd like to very much," said Robert, gallantly. "Lorrie knows them pretty well; we were all summer up there at Put-in-Bay together, and she used to do fancy work with them and the rest of the ladies on the porch of the hotel; Lorrie and Mother got to knowing the Van Cleves pretty well, lots better than I do — excepting Van, of course. Lorrie says he isn't a bit like the others. I don't believe he is, myself. Seems to me from the little I've seen of them (and Lorrie says so, too) that that old lady Van Cleve

and Mrs. Lucas and Evelyn are all of them the kind that get up and run around in circles and scream if they don't get their own way, or things don't go to suit them. Van's not at all like *that*. And the Major —" he checked himself again, eying me with a dubious smile that presently became another laugh. "That's all *bunk*, you know, those stories he tells — you knew that, didn't you?" he said confidentially. "Isn't he the prize hot-air-distributor, though?" He made a metaphorical gesture. "*Whoosh!* And the blow it most killed father! Van knows it, of course. But nobody can say anything about his uncle before him — not much! He'd take your head off. It must be pretty hard on him sometimes, though."

Mrs. Gilbert's entrance, patting her hair and picking a stray thread or two from her dress, put a stop to these confidences. Robert, as oft happens with young people, was struck into dumbness and awkwardness again by the parental presence; and sat quite silent and self-conscious until the end of the visit. "Won't you have some peach-brandy? You know I'm one of those amusing creatures, an old-fashioned housekeeper, and I love to inflict my home-made stuff on people," said Mrs. Gilbert, as we rose. "Oh, the decanter's empty. Mercy, that's not at all like old-fashioned housekeeping!"

I said elegantly that I thought that was a great testimonial to the brandy, and as I had had a taste, I could easily understand why it would be hard to keep the decanter filled — whereat Mrs. Gilbert, who was really very Virginian in her ways, at once announced and insisted on it that she was going to give me some — so handsome a speech must be recognized — now don't say a word — she always had plenty — a two- or three-gallon jug every fall; one can't have a *little* of a thing like that, you know; it was like mincemeat and preserves, it must be put up in quantities — and if I really

and truly liked it — ? She would send me over a bottle that very evening — Robert should bring it — why, dear me, it was no trouble at all, and he would be only too glad, etc. — all the way to the front door and down the steps ! I thought, nevertheless, that the young gentleman looked rather red in the face and confused and put out, at being assigned this butler's errand. Mothers never will realize that their little boys have grown up ! And, by the way, Bob did not come over that evening with the peach-brandy, and I never heard another word about it ; so maybe it had given out, after all.

Summit Avenue, where the Van Cleves had established themselves, was in those days a quiet, plain street on the edge of one of our most fashionable and expensive suburbs, and quite popular, therefore, with us small gentry. The row of brick houses, whereof Number Eight was one, commanded a distant and narrow prospect of the river and the Kentucky hills ; and a fine, large, comprehensive one of the back-yards and clothes-lines of various aristocratic residences fronting on the main street near by. One always remarked upon how beautifully the So-and-Sos kept their grounds when one called on some Summit Avenue acquaintance, and beheld, as not infrequently happened, the So-and-Sos' colored man washing a carriage across the way, or lounging and chatting in the stable door with a visiting colored gentleman (temporarily out of employment). Number Eight, although it was of precisely the same plan and architecture as its neighbors on either hand, still contrived to appear amongst them with a certain distinction, acquired, without doubt, from its present tenants — or so I fancied. The whole row was, as a matter of fact, out of date and beginning to be wofully shabby-genteel, but neither of those terms could be applied to the Van Cleves, and their home looked like them. A nice-looking German maid-of-all-

work let me into the long, dark, narrow hall whence a long, dark, narrow stairway ascended steeply to the floors above. In the parlor there were charming cretonne draperies, cushions, and so on; and chairs and tables which one might guess to be the solemn black walnut of a few years earlier, now rendered extraordinarily seemly and sprightly by a disguise of white enamel paint; there were ivory-tinted plaster casts; there were "Copley Prints" and "Braun Photographs" of all the best-known classics; there were smartly colored posters framed in passe-partout; and there were, besides, all over the delicate green walls, a glorious lot of water-color sketches, and chalk and crayon representations of woodland scenes, old mills, Italian-looking boys in costume, the Venus de Milo, Phidias's or Somebody's head of Jupiter, and other studies of antiquity; and, at my elbow, an easel with an oil-painting in a handsome frame of a brass kettle, a tumbler, a napkin with red fringe, and a plate with a banana on it — admirable portraits, all of them. These trophies recalled a rumor that one of the ladies was "artistic," the youngest, most probably; and this was presently confirmed by Mrs. Lucas and the grandmother, who entered restlessly sparkling with a kind of overpowering and devastating graciousness of welcome; it left you stunned, tense, with the sensation that something tremendous had happened or was about to happen during every moment of your stay in the house!

"Yes, Evelyn — my daughter Evelyn — is the artist, or, rather, the art student. She is studying at your Paradise Park Academy," Mrs. Lucas explained. "Oh, *thank* you for saying that! Of course, *we* think she has talent. Evelyn is very *temperamental*, all her teachers have always said, and *temperament* is invaluable!" — and in the middle of this, the young lady herself came in, from an outdoor sketching class in the



Park in remarkably neat tramping attire with a trig little folding camp-stool, portfolio, and artists' et ceteras under her arm. More superlatives, more graciousness, more excitement! They were indeed, as I had been warned, as different as possible from the lank, sandy-haired, tongue-tied youth I had met in his uncle's company and seen going about with them, later. Young Kendrick did not seem at all vivacious or ready-witted; he was a little slow, if anything; whereas nobody could have been quicker, more unsparingly enthusiastic and emphatic, than these other Van Cleves. They were delighted with the city, the street, the house, the people. Everybody was so kind, so charming, so interesting, so clever! Wasn't All Saints' an attractive church? Wasn't Mr. Babcock a *wonderfully* gifted man for the ministry — so true, so *eloquent*, so *sound*! Wasn't Mrs. Gilbert a dear, sweet woman? Wasn't Lorrie simply a *precious* girl —!

"Oh, you're sitting in a draught there; *do* take this chair! So careless of me; I didn't notice before!" cried Mrs. Lucas, interrupting herself with startling suddenness and energy in the midst of a cataract of exclamation points; "*do* take this chair! I *know* you're not comfortable!"

"Why, thank you — I'm all right — there isn't any draught, I think —"

"Oh, yes, I *know* there is! Do take this chair — you'll be *quite* safe *here*. And suppose you caught cold! I'd never forgive myself!" says Mrs. Lucas, tragedy in her voice. All at once, terror quivered in the air about us; pneumonia — diphtheria — tuberculosis — all the forms of death from taking cold menaced me; the Grim Reaper, as our newspapers love to call him, was flourishing his scythe for the blow, when I averted the calamity by moving to the other chair! Everybody breathed freely again (I trust), at least until the next crisis, which occurred when the maid brought in

"You take sugar? — I don't like it," said she, looking at her bright, insistent eyes; "you take sugar?"

"No, thank you, I—,"

"Oh, you must try sugar! This tea doesn't taste nice without sugar, and I do so want you to have a nice cup of tea! Really, you'll take sugar, won't you? I know you won't like it without sugar, — I know you won't! Have you ever tried sugar? You ought to, really — you can have no idea how it improves tea. Do let me put some in — now do! I know you'll like it with sugar!"

I took sugar; and tranquillity was restored. That I did not start from her chair and begin screaming," which at one moment had been my intention, perhaps, I am glad to say, I never thought of.

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strung and sensitive," Mrs. Van Cleve also explained aside; "and of course Evelyn is all she has in the world, and Evelyn isn't strong, either, so they're each one a constant anxiety to the other. It's nothing but affection and worry, you know, but it sounds so much like quarrelling, I sometimes wonder what strangers think of it."

"Oh, I hear what you're saying, Mother," said Mrs. Lucas from behind her tea things, looking up with a roguish smile that was very attractive and disarming, somehow. She addressed me. "What they really think is that Evelyn has been terribly spoiled, whenever she is rebellious, and I have to insist with her. But you know how it is with young people, they don't know what's best for them. I tell Evelyn and Van Cleve that they will both live to thank me for making them mind. You've met Van Cleve? Isn't he the *dearest, noblest* boy?"

"That is, of course *we* think so," put in the grandmother; suddenly her eyes filled. She had to take a quick gulp of her tea to keep down her emotion.

"Van Cleve's a splendid fellow," said the Major, emphatically, setting his cup on the table; "an unusual young fellow, madame. Mr. Gebhardt, whom I've no doubt you know — I mean Mr. Julius Gebhardt the banker, your most prominent citizen, I should judge —" (and it is impossible to give any idea in writing of the lusciousness which Major Van Cleve managed to impart to this description) — "paid Van what *we* consider the very high compliment of inviting him to accept a position in the National Loan and Savings, of which he is the president, as you know, of course. 'Your nephew is a striking example of an old head on young shoulders, Major!' Mr. Gebhardt remarked to me the other day. Gebhardt is himself a very original and brilliant man, a man of enormous character."

"That's what makes us sure Van Cleve is going to like it at the bank — Mr. Gebhardt and he will be so congenial," said Mrs. Lucas, with so much innocent pride, one could not find it in one's heart to laugh. It was a chorus of absurdly and pathetically extravagant praise. Did they repeat these things to Van Cleve's face? It set one upon the thought, what kind of an atmosphere was this for a young man to live and grow up in? The Kendrick boy looked sensible, and all that I had heard about him so far sounded sensible; but it would need a deal of intrinsic force in any character to weather through these alternate gusts of hysterical devotion and hysterical tyranny, and keep its integrity to the end. It so fell out that coming away, about a square from the house, I encountered Van Cleve himself, striding along home in the late afternoon, and whistling sturdily. He recognized me, and stopped and took off his hat at my salutation; and spoke with a very nice manner, about which it struck me there was less of boyishness than I had noticed in him the first time — yet that was only a few weeks ago. He gallantly turned back to escort me to the car; and on the way, Bob Gilbert's name having come up, I said that I had already understood from him that Mr. Kendrick was about to make a change of business.

"Yes," said Van Cleve, briefly. He was not nearly so much of a talker as the other boy. Van, on *his* side, had no idea of launching into talk or praise of his friend, it was plain; and, as to betraying any sort of opinion about Steinberger & Hirsch, or brokers in general and their offices, that would be the last thing in the world to enter young Mr. Kendrick's head. I remember saying to him — out of some queer impulse to experiment — that Mr. Cortwright was a very nice fellow to be associated with in business? And "Yes?" says Van Cleve, in as non-committal a voice as my own, and with a kind of polite blankness of expression.

As we waited for the car, there came walking on the other side of the street, Miss Lorrie Gilbert, in pretty, fresh, white piqué skirts crisp and cool on this warm day, with a straw hat with roses on her brown head and a white embroidered parasol (they had been put down to one-ninety-eight, and I had seen her in the shop the other day gleefully buying one of these bargains out of her little, lean, careful purse) whirling and twirling over her shoulder; Miss Gilbert came walking with some other girl, and they both nodded and waved to us pleasantly. The other girl I saw was that newcomer here, that Miss Jameson, who could be recognized from afar by her bright auburn hair, and who (as the young people reported) was forever attaching herself to Lorrie, anyhow. Van Cleve looked after them with an interest showing through the odd, unyouthful reserve of his face which I fear I had not excited — alas! His light, cool, slate-gray eyes brightened indefinitely.

"Miss Jameson's a very pretty girl, isn't she?" said I, obligingly.

He started faintly. "*Miss Jameson?* Oh, yes, she's awfully pretty!" he said with almost unnecessary heartiness; and the car reaching our corner at that moment, he hustled me on to it, and scurried off after the young ladies, quite like the boy he really was, in spite of his uncannily mature airs. He could be seen to join them, out of breath and smiling, and jabbering fast enough *now*, no doubt!

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCERNING THE GILBERTS AND SOME OTHERS

PROFESSOR SAMUEL GILBERT's name bore after it on the rolls of the University teaching staff a handsome train of capital letters and abbreviations signifying all sorts of honors achieved at, or conferred by, a number of similar institutions of learning, and forming a set of decorations to which the Professor himself was never by any chance known to refer. He was a plain man. He occupied the Chair of Dead Languages; and might be seen any morning, even the rawest, windiest, and iciest, trudging off in the direction of that piece of furniture, to his class rooms in the University; ploughing along with his large, square, tired, placidly humorous face set towards the heights, and his large, square frame clad in a loose, ill-fitting, shabby style not at all in accordance with the dignity of his position and titles. But who ever heard of a dapper or dressy professor? Chairs — of Dead Languages or what-not — in the colleges of this land of wealth and freedom are not notoriously the best-paid of offices; educators as well as education ought to come cheap from our splendidly democratic point of view. And it is possible that Samuel Gilbert, with his head full of hard-won Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, with his capital letters and his scholastic eminence, walked through rain and shine to economize on carfare, and slaved away the long, hot days of summer school to pay last winter's coal bill, and wore his dingy old overcoat and those monstrous, clumsy brogans which furnished his classes so much amusement, be-

cause he could not very often afford to change them. For the matter of that, few of his brother-professors were in much better case. There was Weimer (Metaphysics), who kept his wife and two children in Düsseldorf over in Germany, on half of what it would have cost him here, and who hoped, by saving up most of the other half, to be able to visit them, in two or three years. There were Burdette (Political Science) and Stoller (Mathematics), lucky bachelors who roomed together, thereby reducing expenses incredibly. There was Livingstone (Chemistry), engaged for the last twelve years, and waiting till he should get up to a salary of two thousand for the wedding. No, Professor Gilbert was by no means an isolated instance.

As to Mrs. and Miss Gilbert they were a mother and daughter of a type much more familiar among our American women than the critics would have us believe — active, helpful, and good-tempered, even though they had to trim Mrs. Gilbert's bonnets, and make over Lorrie's party dresses, and clean their own gloves, and go on foot to teas, and skimp and manage daily in a thousand ways which are supposed by most social observers to be unknown to, or disregarded by, our entire feminine population. This unfortunate country is wholly given over to a set of idle, pampered females without head or heart, devoured by mean, fashionable ambitions, who waste their time, and neglect their homes, and ruin their husbands. We know it because we read it in every novel, we see it on every stage, we have it shouted at us from hundreds of pulpits, amateur and professional. The astonishing thing is that you and I don't know any of these wretched creatures, as numerous as they are! All the women of our acquaintance are good wives, sisters, mothers, daughters; if we saw one that had ruined her husband, we would stare as at the dodo! And unbelievable as it sounds, we are certain that there exists a very large section of

American society which positively doesn't care a thing in the world about whether its members are rich or poor, or how or where they live, provided it finds them upright and intelligent and well-bred !

The Gilberts, of course, had to live very simply and unfashionably in the little old house on Warwick Lane ; but this fact — strangely enough, as has been intimated — did not appreciably interfere with their being invited everywhere, and knowing everybody. The winter Lorrie was nineteen, for instance, the first winter she was "out," there could be no question of a *débutante* ball or tea or dinner dance, such as the other girls in her set were treated to, as an introduction to society. Nevertheless, Lorrie went "out" ; she poured at the receptions, she danced at all the Germans, she went to the Charity Ball for the Training-school for Nurses ; she was seen constantly in her little, cheap frocks — one white embroidered net worn over a pink or blue China silk slip, turn about — amongst all the gauze and lace and satin plumage, apparently having as good a time as anybody, with her pretty, waving brown hair, and her bright eyes and cheeks. Sometimes it was Mrs. Gilbert chaperoning her daughter, in her old black grenadine with the jet *passementerie* down the front ; sometimes the Professor himself might be noticed waiting patiently about in corners, with a vague, resigned look, absently polite as if he might be inwardly conjugating a Semitic verb while he answered your remarks about the weather. His dress-coat was the same he had worn at the commencement ball when he graduated from Dartborough Institute, Virginia — Samuel Gilbert, '68. By what his wife regarded as a special dispensation of Providence, Samuel never outgrew that coat ; in middle life he retained the spare, angular, and bony figure of his youth.

There were only the two children — Lorrie, who was the elder by a year and a half, and Robert. Perhaps



their mother, in her secret heart, considered the smallness of the family another dispensation. Mrs. Gilbert was a devout Episcopalian, and would have taken uncomplainingly whatever it pleased her God to send; but He Himself knew that their income had always been a tight fit, and was getting tighter as the cost of living advanced, and the children grew up. Lorrie, indeed, for all her spirits and girlish delight in society, and that spice of coquetry from which, sad to relate, more than one young man had already suffered — Lorrie was, after all, a generous, right-minded sort of young woman, and had wanted very much at one time to study shorthand and go into an office, by way of lightening the family burdens. It was a sane and practical idea; but the Virginia-born father and mother could not bring themselves to accept it favorably — to accept it at all. Their particular generation did not easily emancipate itself from the traditions of their particular State. Even when the point came up of sending Bob to college, which, plan as economically as they might, would strain them to the last notch, Professor Gilbert would not listen to his daughter's proposal.

"Robert must have his education. But better let him go without than sacrifice one child to the other," said the father. And then he added, unconsciously betraying a much stronger feeling, "It's a poor apology for a man who can't take enough care of the women of his family to keep them out of *offices*, I have always thought."

"Father, you're hopelessly archaic, and antediluvian, and behind the times, and out of date!" said Lorrie, and laughed and kissed him between her adjectives. "You're primeval, and Probably Arboreal —"

"Father's just *right*!" cried Bob, stoutly. "It would be just the same as my taking your money that you'd worked hard for, and going off to have a good time with it, Lorrie. I think I see myself!"

"You're not going to college just for a good time, Robert; remember that!" said the Professor, a little anxiously. But Bob, who was always prone to sanguine and brilliant dreaming, had already begun to explain eagerly what he meant to do.

"As soon as I'm through — it's only four years, anyhow — I'm going to get out and *hustle*, you'll see! I mean to make money — I mean to take care of you all. I won't have Father and Lorrie and you, Mums, working around and scratching and saving the way you do now. You just wait!" he declaimed, striding up and down, with sweeping gestures, his hair tumbled, his young face aglow. Mrs. Gilbert watched him, infinitely proud and tender. Of course he was very young and self-confident and boastful, but his ideals were high — they were clean, they were true, thought the mother. If your young men have not the vision, the country perisheth; but her Robert had it, she was sure.

Professor Gilbert, on the other hand, lacking the maternal insight, had had his moments of doubt and perplexity, and angrily hushed misgivings, about his son, before this; and they crowded thickly upon him now. The college they had selected was an ingenuous coeducational establishment situated on a classically named body of water not far from a similarly classically named town in the State of New York. Some notion that the youth would be better away from home during this part of his schooling, or that the foreign atmosphere would have a stimulating effect on him, moved the elder Gilbert to send Robert these four or five hundred miles instead of entering him at the University alongside the paternal Chair. Was it possible that the father, in his heart, feared his own lack of control over his son, or his too easy clemency? The truth is, that to Samuel, the breath of whose nostrils was study, labor, the conquest of difficulties, Robert

offered a painful and disheartening enigma; with all his experience of youth, the Professor found himself unable to solve it. Bob was not a dull boy, nor a bad boy, nor a lazy boy; he was simply and incurably *boy*. He could have yawned his head off over the Dead Languages; all the poetry of both ancient and modern worlds left him cold; he cared no more to read history than to read his mother's cook-book; he kicked his feet and stared out of window in the class at mathematics. With all this, Robert, to the slightly bewildered relief of his parents, made no such poor appearance in their world, being not in the least uncouth, nor, on the surface, at any rate, ignorant. The young fellow was ready enough in talk, gay, mannerly, and agreeable; nobody ever took a joke better, or was more amiably amused at his own blunders. "Never mind, Dad," he used to say, buoyantly, throwing an arm around his father's shoulders, stooped over the desk; "I can't construe worth a cent, and if a hen-and-a-half laid an egg-and-a-half in a day-and-a-half, I don't know what the sum would be, and whether old King Cole signed the Bill of Thingummys in the year Twelve hundred-and-go-to-sleep or not, you can't prove it by me. But never mind! I'm going to *make good*, anyhow. I'm going to come out even. You'll *see*!" And after a serious lecture from the Professor — to which the lad always listened dutifully and respectfully — he would go off to skate, to play ball, to lounge and read a novel, to smoke a cigarette and try a game of pool at the establishment of some dubious Mike or Pat (alack! alas!), to join some party of young people at the Zoo, or the Canoe Club — to do anything under the shining sun, except his work. "I can't understand it!" Professor Gilbert would complain to his wife in their worried private moments; "Bob looks and talks like a gentleman's son — I never caught him in a lie in my life — yet he doesn't seem to have the faintest idea of per-

sonal responsibility. And he can't add, and spells 'judgment' with an e!"

By what despairing labors, or what shrinking use of his own name and influence, the elder Gilbert got his son through the entrance examinations at Eureka College, one can only guess; possibly the standards of that institution were not mercilessly high. Robert went off in fine feather; ere long letters came back brimful of zest for the new life. Such fun! He had been initiated into the B. K. E. — everybody belonged to a fraternity, you know — you *had* to belong to a fraternity — why, if you didn't, you weren't in anything, and couldn't have any good times at all. He would have felt awfully if he hadn't been invited to join; but two or three different frats had come after him. It sounded big-headed for him to say that; but you couldn't help being glad the fellows liked you, you know. He liked them all; they were splendid fellows, every one of them. He was learning to box; pretty nearly everybody boxed or did some kind of athletic stunt; he was going to save up and buy a pair of boxing-gloves. He had wanted to try for the team — the track team, you know — he found he wasn't heavy enough for foot-ball or the crew; he believed he would go in for the short-distance, say the hundred-yard-dash, or perhaps hurdles; several of the men had advised him to. He could get on the Glee or Mandolin Club, too, lots of the fellows had told him; only he didn't like to be borrowing some other fellow's banjo all the time, so he couldn't get very much practice, but he meant to save up and buy one for himself. "It would be great if I could go on tour with the club during the holidays, wouldn't it?" he wrote excitedly. "They have the time of their lives. Every town they go to there're always either some Eureka men, or some belonging to the same frats, and they can't do enough for you. It looks just now as if the expense would

kind of oversize me, but I think maybe I can make it yet, by saving here and there — you watch little Robbie, the Wonder of Eureka College, in his Peerless Performance of Piling up the Scads!" . . . "There's a man in the Glee Club that's a special friend of mine, though he's a good deal older, about twenty-four, I think, and I'm such a kid. That's what they all call me, you know, Kid Gilbert. I think I told you about him before; it's Phil Cortwright, the same fellow that was so nice about telling me about rooms, and the right sort of fellows to know, and all that, when I first got here. He was the one that got me into the B. K. E. He comes from Paris, Kentucky, and I believe his people are in the whiskey business, or race-horses, but you know they don't think anything of that down there — I mean they think it's all right and perfectly gentlemanly. Anyhow, Phil's a crackerjack fellow, and if the Glee Club comes to Cinti., I want to make it pleasant for him. I'd like to have him stay at the house if we can. It won't be any trouble, you know, because we'll be out all the time. Tell Lorrie to stir up the girls, so he'll be invited places. I bet they'll all like him; Cort's a good deal of a fusser, and an awfully clean-cut, good-looking fellow, and dances like a dream, all the girls here say. . . ." And the letter ended with dear old Dad and Mums, he wasn't doing any great things in class, just sort of tailing along with the rest, but don't worry, he'd make it up before the end of the year.

"Stir up the girls! Goodness, they don't need much stirring up about a *man*. Everybody's saying there aren't half enough men to go around, this winter," Lorrie commented, on hearing her brother's commands; "shoals of girls coming out — Leila Dennison and I were counting up the other day, and there're eighteen. But last year there were only ten, and everywhere you went there were always about forty girls to one

man, so the *débutantes* don't seem to make much difference. What's Bob's friend's name?" And that afternoon when Mrs. Gebhardt and Nathalie called for Lorrie, in the elegant Gebhardt equipage, bay horses, dark green liveries, and all the rest of it, Mrs. Gilbert overheard Lorrie as she put on her things swiftly expounding to the other girl, perched on the bed: "... No, he's older than Bob. I like the men to be *old*, don't you? Bob seems to think he's awfully nice. Maybe some of the girls across the river know him; anyhow, he's from Kentucky — I'll ask some of them. Bob says he's good-looking — but you can't tell, men's ideas of good-looking are so funny. And Bob says he's a — wait a minute, I'll have to look at the letter again — 'Cort's a good deal of a *fusser*' — do you suppose that's the latest for *spoony*? I'd hate *that*! ... Oh, Nat, isn't this fashion of separate waists to wear with a black skirt the grandest thing that ever happened? I've made up all of my old stuff in waists, and one skirt does for them all! Oh, I know it doesn't seem so wonderful to *you*, but *I* can't have *tons* of clothes," they went chattering down the stairs.

Perhaps Robert had laid out his plans on too large a scale, or had not had leisure enough for even a single one of the things he meant to accomplish; at any rate, when he came home for the holidays at the mid-year, he was not yet a member of any of the organizations for which he had proposed to qualify, and was still occupying the not at all exalted position in class which he had described. After all, however, — as the young fellow argued good-naturedly, — there was plenty of time; Dad knew that he wasn't any highbrow, Dad didn't expect him to *shine*; he would come out about even with the run of 'em in the end; he was as good as the average. So why be a grind?

Why, indeed? The town was full of young college

men; you saw the fresh faces, you heard the rough music of the boys' voices at every turn — goodly sights and sounds. It was not a moment for sermonizing; everybody wanted them to have a good time, everybody was bent on giving them a good time. In the middle of the festivities, the Eureka Mandolin and Glee Club arrived on their "tour" — 'Rah, 'rah, 'RAH! U-ree-KAH! etc. — Bob rushed down to the train and bore the much-heralded Cortwright home in triumph; not home at once, to be sure, for they had to stop at "The Mecca" to have a high-ball, and stop at Smith's to pick out some neckties, and stop at Andy's for a game of pool, and attend to a dozen and one matters of like importance before finally taking the Elm-hill car. It was a cold and sunny winter day at about that hour of the afternoon when any number of carriages were hurrying to and from luncheons, matinee parties, receptions, and what-not. They sped by with clouds of picture hats, furs, and white gloves, extraordinarily warm-looking and radiant. And no doubt it secretly pleased Mr. Robert Gilbert not a little as the two young men strode along, to be constantly taking off his hat in response to smiling salutes from all these rich and dainty cargoes. Rob was no snob, but hang it, a man can't help taking a pride in his own people, you know, and he liked to show them off to Corty! The latter young gentleman preserved a kind of appreciative immobility; he was twenty-four and a man of the world, who had seen something of life, and — ahem! — of women. Nevertheless, he was not above glancing into a mirror in the drug-store window as they passed and noting anxiously that his overcoat set without a wrinkle. He was tall, slim, straight, and straight-featured, a satisfying example — according to his own ideas — of the type that a certain eminent artist in black-and-white was just then busily bringing into vogue.

"Hello, there's Lorrie now!" said Bob, suddenly. Another carriage had gone by. Bob looked after it. "Somebody's taking her somewhere," he said explanatorily; "Lorrie's generally on the dead jump."

They resumed their walk. "The one with the auburn hair — is that your sister?"

"No — that wasn't Lorrie; her hair's brown, and she's always got it kind of loose and wavy. Lorrie has beautiful hair. No, that red-headed one is a Miss Jameson. I don't know whether she's come here to live, or only visiting one of the girls. You'll meet 'em all at this dinner of the Gebhardts to-night, and the other places, you know."

"Gebhardt? That's a kind of German-sounding name. You have lots of Germans here, haven't you?" Cortwright said fastidiously.

"Yes. The Gebhardts are American-born, though; they're just as American as you or I; Mr. Gebhardt's at the head of a bank here. They've got a beautiful place out on Adams Road."

"Money to burn, I suppose?"

"Yes, I guess so — oh, of course they must have," said Bob, vaguely. It had never occurred to him to notice; he was not interested in the Gebhardt's financial status, nor, in fact, in anybody's. Young Cortwright was of a much more practical turn; he viewed with a more or less appraising eye the carriages and girls Bob pointed out to him, and the handsome, sober, rather old-style residences which at that date decorated our hilltop suburbs. "You know I'm expecting to go into business here or in Chicago — wherever there's the best opening, of course," he confided sagely to his junior; "but wherever it is, I'm going to know the moneyed crowd, you bet. It's the only way to get along."

"Well, that lets *me* out, if you ever settle down here. You won't know *me*!" said Bob, with his ready laugh.



And the other, after an instant of confusion, laughed too, and clapped him a staggering blow on the back. "You *are* a kid, Gil.," he said.

This last conversation took place in Bob's bedroom (the one at the back over the kitchen, a shabby and homely little room like all the rest of the shabby, homely, dignified house) while they were dressing for the dinner; and as Cortwright, having finished first, went downstairs, he repeated to himself that Gilbert *was* a kid, but a good sort for all that, and a regular little Who's-Who-in-Society; anybody could see the family weren't just what you'd call rolling in coin, but that didn't count so much after all, outside of New York; the old Professor was a nice old mossback; and Bob's mother reminded Philip of his own, who had died when he was a little fellow — the young man, for all his ingrained worldliness, thought of her with a momentary flush of sentiment that did him credit. He had not yet met the sister that the Kid was always bragging about — and upon this Mr. Cortwright, straightening his fine, square shoulders, and feeling for the final time to see that his white tie was accurately in place, passed into the living-room, whence he had already heard certain girlish sounds.

A young lady dressed, or, one might say, overdressed, in a delicately elaborate evening toilet of Nile green chiffon, covered with beaded embroidery, fairylike lace festoons and knots of ribbons, who had been sitting in the low chair by the hearth, jumped up with a faint scream at sight of him. Never was fright more overwhelming — considering the very slight occasion for it — or more prettily displayed. She clasped her slim hands together, and gazed at him with wide eyes of the most beautiful deep and clear violet blue ever seen. "Startled fawn style!" said Philip to himself, knowingly; he had not gained that reputation of being an expert and successful "fusser" without practice.

"What stunning red hair! But I thought Bob said the red-headed one wasn't his sister," went through his mind as he delivered a glance nicely compounded of admiration and apology, and began, "Miss Gilbert —?"

"Oh, no, *indeed*, I'm not Lorrie," interrupted the fawn, still in a charming flutter; she dropped her eyes before the young man's, which, to tell the truth, were sufficiently bold, and fidgeted with her frills and laces. "I'm — it's — I'm Miss Jameson — I came over to go with Lorrie to-night, you know — I didn't expect to see any strangers —"

"You didn't, hey? *Come off!*" thought the experienced Philip, sceptically, though the lovely shell-pink of her cheeks had not altered, and the blue eyes were quite childishly candid and open as she faced him with this statement. "I startled you bolting in this way? I'm awfully sorry," he said, and once more allowed his gaze to wander appreciatively over her — a gaze which Miss Jameson apparently did not in the least resent, although she could scarcely fail to be conscious of it. "I'll have to introduce myself, if you don't mind. I'm Bob's friend, Cortwright — you may have heard him —"

"Oh, Mr. *Cortwright!* — oh, of *course!* Why, I didn't know you were here yet! They weren't expecting you *to-day*, were they? When did your train get in?" And with these guileless inquiries, Miss Jameson reseated herself, turning her head so that her profile, exact and finished as a cameo, was exhibited to him in full relief against the dark and dingy old iron mantelpiece. Cortwright, who himself possessed a good figure and no small talent for posing, forgot all his own tactics to stare at her unrestrained; he had never seen so entirely pretty a woman. No wonder she liked to show herself off, he thought; she was pretty all over; the calculated grace of her attitude brought out sweet, exquisite curves and outlines of a

yielding suggestion that set the young man's senses tingling. He did not rebuke himself, not being, perhaps, particularly conscientious on that score, and feeling, moreover, a cynical suspicion that she was fully aware of this powerful feminine appeal — counted confidently on it — wielded it as a familiar tool. He knew something about women, and he had met her sort before! Their eyes met. Cortwright, with a spectacular haste, lowered his to her foot — an enticing foot in a high-heeled satin slipper and all but transparent Nile green stocking.

"Why, we got in in the afternoon — a little late on account of the snow in the mountains, you know," he said, answering her last remark elaborately.

"Oh."

There was another silence; then another interchange of glances. Cortwright began to feel uneasily that the scene ran some risk of becoming ridiculous. She couldn't expect him to start holding hands, or teasing for a kiss right off? That would be a bit *too* strong, although, to be sure, there *are* girls — but not in a house like this — among this kind of people —

"It's awfully cold, isn't it?" said Miss Jameson.

"Yes, but I like it, don't you? So bracing!"

"Yes, it *is* bracing." Again the conversation halted. The young lady appeared to have an exceedingly shallow run of small talk; yet she was anything but bashful. She wore her unusually low-necked ball gown, and languidly uncovered her round, tapering ankles, with an air of complete self-possession. Cortwright looked and looked with a kind of luxuriance. "I like summer better than winter," said Miss Jameson, playing with an elegant trifle of a fan she carried on a slender chain threaded with pearls that hung and swung below her knees. "It's so much warmer."

"Gets almost too hot, though, in this locality sometimes."

"Yes, it *does*, doesn't it?" She looked at him under and through her long, thick lashes this time; and this time Mr. Philip gazed back at her ardently, not thinking it worth the trouble to go through his former pantomime. This was what she was after; and he had always found it worked well to meet them halfway, he said to himself. She was as softly accommodating as a cushion; and it sufficed for her that he was male. But in another moment this most promising flirtation was all off — in Philip's own phrase — because Bob came breezing downstairs into the parlor; and after him Miss Gilbert, who turned out to be no such beauty as the other girl, though she was nice-looking enough, and who gave him a firm little hand, and looked at him out of a pair of straight and steady brown eyes, with a frankness and simplicity which were on the whole rather refreshing.

"We're so glad to have you here, Mr. Cortwright. It's so nice to know Bob's friends," Lorrie said sincerely. "We drove past you and Bob, this afternoon — did you see us? There wasn't time to stop and speak," she added innocently. And Cortwright, glancing swiftly into Miss Jameson's face, experienced a not unnatural glow of conceit, as he knelt down to put on the latter's furry party boots. Well, he *was* a fine-looking fellow; she wasn't the first woman that had found it out, and made an opportunity to meet him!

Then they all bundled off to the Gebhardts' dinner dance, and the ensuing "whirl of gayety," as the *Society Jottings* column in the Sunday supplement described it. There were so many girls and such pretty ones, and so much good eating and drinking, and so fine a dancing floor that Cortwright lost sight of Miss Jameson after the first two-step. He hardly had time for any one girl in particular. At this party and at others, to Bob's immense pride and delight (he was so unreservedly proud and delighted, in fact, that the

older man was at times a little annoyed and almost made ashamed by it), Corty made a highly successful impression in their society. He was undeniably handsome, he dressed well, he could talk, he could dance, he could rattle off any amount of ragtime on the piano, and whistle and sing all the latest "coon songs" and airs from the popular operas. The men liked him; he spent freely, and was an all-around good fellow, they voted. It was with a real reluctance that the young people saw him go when his time was up; and his last act on the day of his departure, after the Wattersons' breakfast at the Country Club, was to entertain a dozen or so of his youthful hosts and hostesses at the vaudeville performance they were having that winter down at the old Pickrell Opera House. I grieve to state that the party under Mr. Cortwright's leadership behaved with regrettable indecorum, notably when Mdle. Patrice came on for her serpentine dance and the calcium-light machine in the gallery threw an illuminated picture of the United States flag accompanied by the legend *La Libertad de Cuba* all over her and her gauze draperies as she serpentine about the stage, a spectacle they singled out to welcome with applause fit to raise the roof. The "Libertad" of this island was something everybody was hearing a good deal about in those days.

Miss Jameson was not one of the guests on this occasion; as it happened, Cortwright had seen her only once or twice after that initial party. He divined that, for some reason, she was not always welcome everywhere in Lorrie's set, but was far too wise to ask why. For all that, Philip did not forget her, and therefore pricked his ears one day at a fragment of talk concerning the young lady between Bob and his sister. "Say, Lorrie, who is this new skirt, anyhow?" the brother demanded inelegantly; "I don't remember ever to have met her before, and yet they say she lives here, and she talks as

if she always had. You know who I mean — Miss Jameson — your friend Paula. She said she wouldn't mind if I called her that — kind of floored me for a minute. I hadn't asked to, you know."

"Why, yes, you do know her, too, Bob. We all went to kindergarten together to Miss Banning when we were little — don't you remember? You ought to know Paula Jameson perfectly well."

"Well, I don't — hold on! I believe I do, too. She must have been the little girl with the flossy sort of clothes that always had whole boxes of chewing-gum in her desk — oh, yes, I know *now*. But where's she been all the while in between? Nobody seems to know her much nowadays. When I asked some of the girls the other day, they all rather sniffed, and said she was hanging on to *you*, and trying to *get in*. Leila said: 'Well, if I was Lorrie, I'd let her *go*. If a girl has lived here all her life, and by the time she's nineteen nobody knows her, why, there's no use anybody else trying to push her. That kind of missionary work doesn't pay.' Aren't girls just the sweetest things to each other, Cort?"

"Oh, don't talk like that, Bob," said Lorrie, a little troubled; "Leila doesn't really *mean* all that, you know. There's nothing the matter with Paula, only — well, her mother has never gone out here and doesn't know many people, and that makes it hard for Paula, you see. And then living in hotels and boarding-houses all the time must be horrid; *nobody* lives in a hotel, here — *nobody*. I think poor Paula has a hard time."

"Why, she dresses out of sight, doesn't she? That's what all the girls say. I guess she's too pretty — that's what's the matter," said Robert, shaking his head profoundly.

"You know better, Bob Gilbert — you're just teasing —"

"Is Miss Jameson so pretty?" said Cortwright, in a

tone of slight surprise. He thought it diplomatic never to express admiration for one girl to another girl. "It seemed to me she lacked animation a little. Didn't talk much, you know."

"She doesn't need to talk — she can just *look*," said Bob. "Why, yes, Cort, she's a stunning beauty. Funny you haven't noticed it. Don't I tell you that's the reason all the girls are so down on her? *Wow*, look out for Lorrie!" He riotously dodged an imaginary thunderbolt; and Mrs. Gilbert came mildly in to see what all the noise was about.

The visit, the holidays, came to an end; all the young people vanished in a twinkling, Cinderella-fashion, when the tocsin sounded; no more tearing off from luncheon to card-party, from card-party to dinner, from dinner to cotillion, no more coming in at four o'clock in the morning, and yawning down to breakfast at noon. Bob's father and mother felt with a formless disquiet that they had scarcely seen the boy at all; there had been no time for the long, intimate, kind talks they had planned, not one quiet evening, not one meal in private. Perhaps a tear or two fell and damaged Robert's shirts as Mrs. Gilbert folded them into the trunk; it had all been so hurried and noisy and hilarious — *too* hilarious that night while that young Mr. Cortwright was here, and the boys had come home at dawn, and the cabman came up the steps with them, and Samuel himself had to go down and let them in — the mother thought of that night with shrinking. Young men must be young men, of course, but — she got up suddenly from the midst of the clothes strewed all about, and went and took from her desk a tintype of Robert when he was four years old, in his first funny little breeches, with a top in his hand, and stood looking at it a long while. He had been her little boy then — all hers. Mrs. Gilbert put the picture down with a sigh, and went back to her packing.

Bob did actually get through his Freshman year and pass the examinations without serious mishap, somehow or other; and returned to Eureka the next fall, a Sophomore, as exuberantly sanguine and care-free as ever. His letters, which were not so regular as they had been, and very much briefer, now began to be filled with a disconcerting variety of schemes and dreams relating to his career upon leaving college — vast fortunes he would acquire by manœuvres based upon all sorts of airy possibilities. His friend Cortwright, it seemed, had already finished, and was now entering upon brokerage and insurance in his home town. Cort was a fine business man — splendid — a *hustler* — always right on the spot — and such a good sport, too. Bob guessed he was making a lot of money; if Dad only had a little loose money, Cort could double it for him on the stock market, Bob was sure. You see Corty always had *inside information*, that made it perfectly safe; and, besides, he was pretty sharp; it took somebody pretty sharp. Robert didn't believe Phil would stay in Paris long; he was already talking of moving to some bigger place and maybe would come to Cin. Wouldn't that be bully! There was more in the same strain over which the parents exchanged worried glances. It was different from all that wholesome chatter about frats and athletics; the boy talked too much about money; what was all this jargon of "fliers" and "sure things"? And as for classes —! Professor Gilbert girded himself up, and wrote a letter sternly reminding Robert of his age, his duties, the value of his time and education; and suffered tortures of anxiety and self-reproach during the weeks that went by before any answer came. "Have I hopelessly antagonized him?" thought poor Samuel, wretchedly; "why didn't I let him alone? But I said nothing but what I've said over and over again, and Bob never got hurt, or angry, or sulky at it. Something else must have happened. I *know* Bob's all right —



but you can't tell anything about boys." Daily and hourly these contradictory formulas chased each other through the unlucky father's mind; he could not share this trouble with his wife; he scarcely dared face her across the table, where she sat with eyes as clouded as his own. How many fathers and mothers have known this pitifully small tragedy — this bootless fright and care! All for the sake of some selfish lout of a boy who forgets or neglects to write them a letter now and then! — as superior-minded or childless people will remark with amusement and disdain.

In the end, Lorrie, who had a certain affectionate understanding of her brother's character, though her own was so different, was visited by an intuition on which she acted in her usual prompt and direct fashion. "Dearest Bobs, I'm afraid you are bothered about your allowance," she wrote. "I don't see how you get along on it, because you must *have* to do certain things, you can't get out of doing them; and you haven't got much to do with. I should think even with the greatest care, you'd get behind sometimes; and then it's always so hard to get straight again —" and so on without a word about duty and ambition and self-sacrifice, which indeed were subjects Lorrie would have considered altogether too lofty for *her*. She got a reply by return post full of bad spelling and contrition and confession and promises of amendment in Bob's big, loose scrawl, the pages decorated with one or two blobs and smears which looked as if Master Robert, in spite of his sex and his twenty years, had had to wipe his eyes at times over this composition. The lad was really honest, really loving. Yes, he acknowledged, he had "got in bad"; he *couldn't* tell Dad; Dad never could see things *his* way. But it was like her to guess it. She always *understood*, somehow; there wasn't anybody like her — no fellow ever had such a sister. Would she tell Dad and Mums for him now? He hoped he could get through without

asking them for any more money ; they were so good, and scraped and pinched and stinted themselves to give him what they did, and his allowance would have been plenty enough for anybody but a fool, and he wasn't worth what they did for him. His friend Cortwright was going to fix up some kind of a loan for him (Phil was in that business, you know), get him some money so he could pay the fellows and the other people he owed, that is ; and afterwards Bob could pay the loan off by degrees, and he guessed it would be all right. Cortwright was an awfully good fellow. But Bob couldn't make the exams this year — he was way behind — would Lorrie tell Father that, too ? And he was going to take a brace from this minute *right on* — he wasn't going to have anything like this happen again — just give him a chance, and he'd *prove* it — he was going to get even, you *see* !

It is a sorry task to write or read of these years of Robert's — a sorry and a wearisome one to rehearse the schedule of failure and disappointment and folly — let us leave it ! In the middle of his third term (by which time Professor Gilbert was perceptibly grayer and more stooped, and his wife looked ten years older) the young man came home. One of the first persons he fell in with was Van Cleve Kendrick, who must have been scrubbing along in the shoe factory, the distillery, Heaven knows where, all this while, and acquiring experience of a very different order from Robert's. Cortwright was here, too, with Steinberger & Hirsch down on Third Street. And I suppose that meeting reported in the opening chapter must have taken place somewhere about this date — '92, or was it '93 ? How time flies !

## CHAPTER V

### THE MAN OF THE HOUSE

MR. GEBHARDT of the National Loan and Savings Bank had first come into contact with the Van Cleve family on the occasion of one of their numerous transfers of property, or some other of those varied financial operations in which they were almost constantly engaged before young Kendrick put his unwelcome hand to the helm. As the banker was a busy man, daily attending to a great many affairs and seeing a great many people, it was rather odd that he should still retain, in common with everybody else who had ever met them, a distinct, even vivid, recollection of every member of the family; but so he did, and he had no difficulty in "placing" Van Cleve when the latter came hunting for a job. The young man, who made this move, as he had made every other that directly concerned himself, without informing his people, much less consulting them, approached Mr. Gebhardt quite unsupported. It would not have occurred to him to speak of his family, even had he been aware that the banker knew them, or anything about them. And it was with measurable surprise that, upon giving his name, he observed Mr. Gebhardt to consider a moment and then heard him say: "Van Cleve? There were some Van Cleves shareholders in the old Cincinnati, Paducah, & Wheeling Packet Company that failed here about ten or fifteen years ago. I remember meeting them at the time when we made an effort to get some of the heaviest owners together and see what could be done. Any relation?"

Van explained.

"Indeed, you don't say so? Yes, those were the people. I remember them all very well. Your grandmother was a very fine-looking woman at that time, Mr. Kendrick. Is she living still? Ah! Your uncle was a general in the Confederate army, I think. No? Ah! You're all living here now, you say? Well, now — what has been your previous business experience, I should like to ask?" And a few days thereafter, Mr. Gebhardt, happening to meet Major Van Cleve on the street, not only recognized him at once, but stopped and spoke very pleasantly, referring to the new recruit at the National Loan.

"Ah, yes, so I understood from Van," said Major Stanton, affably, nodding at the other with a humorously wry smile. He spoke confidentially. "The fact is, Mr. Gebhardt, Van Cleve doesn't really *need* to work. We wanted him to go to college, but nothing would satisfy him but trying a business career first. It distresses the ladies, my mother and sister, a good deal. But I say to them: 'Why, it's his whim — for the Lord's sake let the boy try it! Most people would be glad to see a young man's natural wildness take this turn. I tell you, it might be a damn sight worse!'" Major Van Cleve had never uttered an oath in his mother's presence in his life, and it was now some years since the family resources had permitted his having more than a couple of dollars spending-money in his pockets at one time — all of which did not prevent his making these statements with a perfectly clear conscience. He had a romantic imagination, and the priceless gift of believing the romances he imagined. Mr. Gebhardt, if he felt some doubts, was still, perhaps unconsciously, impressed by the fact that the military gentleman's appearance supported, gave a sort of color and atmosphere to his large talk; he did not seem to be in the least poor or pinched. The Van Cleves had the

secret of that ; they contrived, on next to nothing, and almost without effort, to look fashionable, opulent, and leisurely — all excepting Van Cleve himself.

"Your nephew seemed to me a bright, practical young fellow," the banker remarked ; "he gave the impression of wanting money and being willing to work hard for it."

"Oh, yes, yes, that's very characteristic," said Major Van Cleve, indulgently. "Van Cleve reminds me constantly of a story my father used to tell which he had heard from *his* father, who was a very successful attorney in New York City in the old days, seventy-five years ago, or thereabout, you know. He went out one morning to stick up a sign on his office door-post, 'Boy Wanted.' While he was doing it, he felt a tug at his coat tails, and, turning around, here was a ragged, barefoot urchin of twelve or so. 'Please, sir, you don't need that sign no more.' 'Don't, hey ?' says my grandfather, astonished, 'why, I want a boy !' 'No, sir, you don't, not no more. I'm the boy !' Now that was exactly like Van Cleve. He'd have done that very thing. And that boy, Mr. Gebhardt," the Major concluded with suitable weight and emphasis ; "that boy was John Jacob Astor !" Mr. Gebhardt, after a barely perceptible pause, received the anecdote with such cordial appreciation that Stanton's opinion of his parts and personality rose several degrees.

The National Loan and Savings was not a large institution, though reputed very solid. It was housed in an old-fashioned brick building on one of the streets up towards the Canal, amongst similarly plain, workaday surroundings ; and its depositors, as Van Cleve found out soon after his entrance, were mostly laboring folk. They came in there in streams the first of the month and on Saturdays, when the bank was kept open till nine o'clock at night to accommodate them with their pay envelopes. Van, from behind the brass

netting of the bookkeeper's cage in the rear, could see them filing up; and, being an observant youth, before long could identify them all — young women stenographers — young men clerks like himself — market-gardeners — master carpenters and bricklayers — thrifty servant-girls in feathers and cheap furs, but with always a fraction of the week's wages in their showy imitation leather purses — nice old German women with black shawls, and mysterious little black-lidded baskets, and clean, brave old faces under their bonnets of black straw and bugles — one swarthy, excitable man who used to come with a small boy interpreter and who carried a greasy bag full of dimes, nickels, and pennies, an Italian shoeblack from somewhere down at the end of Sixth Street, as Van Cleve learned. The half-dozen directors themselves were drawn from these ranks — old Mr. Burgstaller, the retired toy merchant who looked like Santa Claus's twin brother himself — old Mr. O'Rourke, now also retired, but who had for years conducted the grain and feed store on Wayland Street opposite the market-house — these were of them. They all had such an air of age and experience that Van Cleve might have lost heart to observe from example how long was the way he had to travel; but the young man was not of that temperament. "Lord, if I thought I'd have to wait till I was seventy to get to be a bank director, I'd quit right here!" he said to himself scornfully. And he noticed with approval that the President of the National Loan was much younger than any of his advisers; Mr. Gebhardt could not have been more than fifty.

He was a self-made man, and as such commanded Mr. Kendrick's highest respect; whether he altogether and always liked his employer, the young fellow was not quite certain; Van was slow to form a liking for anybody. "Mr. Gebhardt is all right — only I don't know that I much fancy all that glad-hand business,"

he would reflect when, as sometimes happened, he saw the President come forth and circulate among his depositors, let us say, on one of those busy and crowded Saturdays, in a genial, informal way, conversing with many of them in the tongue of the Fatherland, and displaying a hearty personal interest, which Van Cleve, for the soul of him, could not believe to be always very deep or very sincere. Van himself was frankly engrossed in his own business; he could not understand how any man could waste time on another man's concerns unless they were intimately connected with his own; and rather than look upon Mr. Gebhardt's attitude as sheer altruism — something in the commercial world to be at once laughed at and distrusted — Van Cleve chose to call it a piece of policy. "After all, he's got to stand in with these people. Their little dabs of money are what he's founded his bank on. He knows more about getting along with 'em than I do; and being a good mixer is a kind of an asset in this business," he would argue to himself shrewdly. However, Van did not make the mistake, as might have been expected, of attempting to be a "good mixer" himself; he knew that he had no talent that way. Like many another boy of his years, he was the queerest mixture conceivable of youthful egotism, pride, ambition, common-sense, absurd cynicism, and real sentiment.

Mr. Gebhardt, on his side, extended that paternal sympathy of his to Van Cleve the same as to the others, whether influenced or not by the fact that the young man undeniably did do the work assigned him remarkably well, and exhibited in all things an iron integrity. There were no sons in the Gebhardt household, only a tribe of pretty, fair-haired girls, with a pretty, fair-haired mother looking like a sister to the rest, who used to come down to the bank in any one of several handsome family vehicles with their dashing team of bays, and carry the father off in a whirlwind of chattering

and laughter and caresses. Van Cleve had met them — indeed, Mrs. Gebhardt and Natalie, who was the oldest, and the only one “out,” had a calling acquaintance with the ladies of Van’s family; but as Mr. Kendrick took not the slightest interest in young women and never put himself out for anything but the most perfunctory civilities, it is not surprising that they should reciprocate whole-heartedly. On the contrary, they were quite enthusiastic about Bob Gilbert. Robert and his friend met nowadays not infrequently in a business way; and Mr. Gebhardt, having come across the Professor’s son once or twice, had the curiosity to ask somebody what that young Gilbert was doing? The man he inquired of, who happened to be Mr. Max Steinberger, laughed.

“Looks like I ought to know,” he said; “why, he’s with us. He’s got the job young Van Cleve — no, that’s not his name — I mean the young fellow you took on up at your over-the-Rhine dollar-shop — we’ve got Gilbert in his place.”

“Is he any good?”

“Good enough. How’s yours?”

Gebhardt, who was never known to utter an unkind or uncharitable criticism of any one, commended Van Cleve warmly. “You did a little better on the deal than Leo and myself, I guess,” said the other, hearing him. And they fell to talking about the proposed bond issue and promptly forgot both boys. But one day a while later, Mr. Gebhardt took occasion to ask his junior bookkeeper what was the real reason he had wanted to leave the brokers.

“I somehow suspected at the time that you weren’t dissatisfied wholly on account of the salary,” he said.

“Well, Mr. Gebhardt, I thought I was worth more,” said Van, obstinately reticent. Then he looked up and, meeting his employer’s eye, thawed a little. “No,



I didn't like it," he confessed. "Too much spend and too much souse," said he, succinctly.

"What, Steinberger and Leo Hirsch? Why, I'm surprised to hear you say that! I had no idea —"

"I mean the — the office force — the office in general," Van Cleve explained hastily and not too clearly; "I don't mean Mr. Steinberger or Mr. Hirsch themselves. They've got the money to play the races and all the rest of it, all they choose, as far as that goes. And of course they both take a drink now and then; but I wasn't talking about *them*. They're Germans, anyhow, and could hold a barrel, either one of 'em, without its phasing them —" and at this point Mr. Kendrick, abruptly remembering the nationality of the gentleman he was addressing, halted in a fine beet-red confusion. But Gebhardt only laughed; he liked — or seemed to like — the young man's bluntness.

All this while, how were his elders supporting Van's persistent "whim" of making his own living and incidentally a not inconsiderable part of theirs, to which they had yielded so painfully in the first place? Why, they were supporting it with the most astonishing patience! They had resigned themselves to the fact that this world belongs to the young people. Nobody, at least, will dispute the truth of that axiom who has lived to the middle years or a little beyond, and of a sudden found himself being taught, cared for, governed, and set in order by some competent and cocksure son or daughter of twenty or thereabouts. Perhaps, upon this discovery, the wisest plan is to abdicate at once with what grace and good-humor we can muster; but sometimes the change of position has come about by such slow and imperceptible degrees that we have been deposed, lo, this long time, before we suspect it, and it's too late for action of any kind. The king is dead; long live the king!

This last phenomenon is what had taken place in

the Van Cleve household during the two or three years succeeding that dramatic day when Van Kendrick grew up. No one of them knew how or when it happened; no one exactly resented it; perhaps the family were only conscious of his ascendancy when their affairs came to one of those crises that were forever occurring. Nevertheless, it would have been glaringly apparent to any outsider that the young Van Cleve, with his lanky, undeveloped figure and his smooth chin, and flat, straight, smooth upper lip on which he was desperately cultivating half a dozen scattering bristles, with his youthful voice which had just settled into a rather harsh bass, and his uneasy reticence, and the amazing seriousness with which he took himself most of the time — it would have been apparent to any observing person, I say, that this more or less callow young gentleman was the head of the House of Van Cleve, for all his callowness. Outward and visible signs declared it, if nothing else. Van sat at the end of the table and carved the meat nowadays; he read the paper over his coffee-cup of a morning while his uncle meekly got through breakfast without that literary entertainment; he took his hat and slammed the hall door behind him and went off down town to the office with his peers; the family accounts were submitted to him; the women came to him for their money; the servants were trained to regard his tastes — “Mrs. Van Cleef she say, ‘Marta, Mr. Kendrick he don’t like those biscuit,’ shust like she’d say, ‘Marta, *der Herr Gott*, He don’t like those biscuit,’” their German maid remarked acutely; these were a few of the straws showing what way the wind blew. Possibly Van himself had a clearer conception of the position than any of the others, although the Fates had conspired to put him there — it was none of his doing; to accept responsibilities was natural to him, and he was not at all disposed to be arrogant or overbearing in his leader-

ship; the privilege of bullying a lot of women and one feeble elderly gentleman did not attract him. The young fellow knew very well that he was the strongest member, in truth, the only strong member of the family; he put it, privately, in his practical and literal way, that he was the only one who had ever earned a cent, or displayed a particle of common-sense about either saving or spending it; yet he took no great credit to himself on that account. Van Cleve could not, for the life of him, have understood how any man in the same circumstances could have acted otherwise. He had to take care of them — Grandma and Uncle Stan and all of them, didn't he? By Jove, he — why, he *had* to, you know! There wasn't any getting around *that*. They couldn't do anything for themselves; while, as to him, work didn't worry *him* any. He *had* to work, anyhow, didn't he? Do you suppose anybody was going to give him his living and a good time for nothing? Not much!

According to these fairly cool and accurate or — as Van would have called them himself — level-headed views, did Mr. Kendrick pursue his career. The family got used to his queer youthful maturity; they got used to the idea of his being steady and successful as if it were the most everyday thing in the world for a young man to be steady and successful; they got used to being dependent on him, and Van Cleve, on his own side, got used to it, too. He directed the disposition of what little money they had left from the original inheritance, and added his own to it, and kept the old strong box with "J. VAN CLEVE" on the top of it in his closet in his own room and carried the keys unquestioned. Mrs. Van Cleve sometimes said with a sigh that he reminded her of his grandfather; but as the late Joshua had been a spry, dry, little man with a hard jaw, and as bald as a turnip at less than twenty-five years of age, she could not have discerned much

physical resemblance. By a coincidence the likeness most struck her about the first of the month when the bills came around; Van Cleve did not always see all of them — does any lady ever show the man of the house *all* her bills? — and perhaps the grandmother recalled the days when she had quakingly presented the milliners' and dressmakers' statements to her Joshua (who, nevertheless, was reasonably liberal to his family), or, dreadful to relate, smuggled them out of his sight and knowledge. Times were altered, and she and Mrs. Lucas were both of them good, upright, self-denying women who passed by the most enticing shop windows and bargain counters resolutely, and turned and mended and cut over their clothes and remodelled their old hats, and made hash for Monday dinner out of Sunday's joint with the utmost gallantry and cheerfulness. As has been hinted, they clashed seriously with Van Cleve only when the question arose of one of those indisputably wise, well-considered, and profitable changes which everybody in the house, except Van himself, was eternally planning.

"That Elmhurst Place house is only thirty-seven-and-a-half a month — only two dollars and a half more than this — the rent's practically the same," his aunt argued about six months after their enthusiastic installation at No. 8 Summit Avenue; "and no comparison between the houses — *no comparison!* It's just exactly what we were hunting for last summer when we had to take this. Of course it was rented then, Elmhurst Place is *so* desirable. And that's why I'm so anxious to speak for it at *once*, before anybody else snaps it up. I'd better see the agent to-day, hadn't I, Van?" She looked at her nephew with an odd mingling of persuasion and command; Van Cleve, the women said to one another, was so hard to manage at times; it was *so* hard to make him understand. Now he swallowed the last of his coffee and folded up

his napkin with a maddening deliberation before answering.

"No, I think not, Aunt Myra. I think we'd better not move. That two-dollars-and-a-half difference in the rent just about pays the water rate. It's not quite the same thing, you see. Besides, it would cost a lot to move. What's the matter with this house, anyhow? You liked it well enough at first."

All three ladies gave a gentle scream of consternation. "Why, Van! *This house!* Why, you *know* we just took it because we had to go *somewhere* —!"

"And we didn't know what a state it was in — that *awful* pink and green and blue wall-paper on the back bedroom —!"

"I'm afraid the place will fall down over our heads before we can get out of it! Three of the door-knobs and I don't know how many window-catches are all *loose and waggly* —!" Everybody began to declaim vigorously, if without much sequence; it was really impossible to think immediately of all the reasons against living a minute longer in this unspeakable house.

"Oh, I guess they'll fix those things for us. It's not going to fall down right off, anyhow; we'd better stay and give it another chance," said Van Cleve, placidly, returning to his paper.

"Well, but ever since those horrid people moved next door, the tone of this neighborhood has lowered so — that's my main objection to staying here," Mrs. Van Cleve remonstrated; "the woman had a *shawl* airing out of one of the upstairs back windows yesterday morning. Think of it! A great, coarse, *red shawl* hanging right *in* the window! I've never lived next door to anything quite so *common* as *that* before!"

Van, behind the newspaper, studying the market reports, gave no sign of having heard her. "He's Joshua *all over!*" the grandmother said inwardly, divided between exasperation and a kind of pride;

"he used to sit just that way and not answer me time and again!" She was silent a little, perhaps thinking of old days; but the others persevered with reproachful vehemence.

"We could take that money, that sixty-five dollars we got from the old farm the other day, and use it for the moving, so it wouldn't cost *you* anything, Van Cleve," said Evelyn, who had a talent for this style of argument. "I'm sure it isn't healthy here. There's a great big damp spot in one corner of the yard whenever it rains. I'm going to speak to the doctor about it. Mother oughtn't to stay in a humid atmosphere; her nerves will give out. It takes ever so much nervous energy to stand the colds she has, and of course the low quality of the air right here must bring them on."

"Never mind me, Evelyn; never mind me — I'll soon be well — my cold isn't anything," cried out Mrs. Lucas, though, indeed, a sudden wild terror started in her large, beautiful dark eyes; she was very easily frightened about herself and her state of health, and the merest suggestion of any need for doctors sent before her mind in dismally dramatic procession a dozen appalling pictures of suffering, decline, death agonies, the hearse, the coffin, the ghastly open grave! She began with a note of almost frenzied appeal in her voice: "Van dear, *do* put down that paper and listen. I think it's more important than you realize for us to get away from this house and neighborhood, and it will be money *well spent* to move. You're just as fine and strong and splendid as you can be, Van — you know we all *know* that — you're a dear, noble fellow," said Mrs. Lucas, stirred by a real and generous emotion, her sweet, hysterical voice breaking a little; she was sincerely fond of the young man; "but you don't realize how young you are; you haven't had the *experience* I've had. You're not so well able to judge as I am. I think it's our *duty* to move. We *all* think

so, and two heads are better than one, you know, Van."

"Depends on the heads," said Van Cleve, flippantly, unmoved by these powerful representations which, as was provokingly apparent, he was not even going to answer. Instead, he got up, taking out his pipe, and went over to the mantel for a match.

"I wish — I *wish* you wouldn't do that, Van," said Mrs. Joshua, distressfully; "I promised your dear mother for you that you wouldn't touch tobacco nor liquor before you were twenty-five. It was a *sacred promise*, Van."

Van Cleve looked down at her, humorous and forbearing; he stuffed the tobacco down into the bowl. "Oh, bosh, Grandma!" he said with profane cheerfulness; and stooped and kissed the old lady's cheek, and walked off unimpressed. He was guiltless of diplomacy; but, strangely and illogically enough, at this speech and the rough, boyish caress, Mrs. Van Cleve surrendered without terms, struck her colors, and went over to his side incontinently!

"Well, I daresay Van's right about it, Myra," she said as the door closed behind him. "There's no real reason why we should move. And anyhow Van Cleve ought to have the say — he's taking care of us all — he's the best boy that ever lived!" Her old face trembled momentarily.

"Oh, of course! Van Cleve is always right!" Evelyn proclaimed satirically; she remained alone to fight the battle with the older lady, for Mrs. Lucas had already dashed into the hall after her nephew, who was in the act of putting on his overcoat.

"Van," she said tensely, stopping him with one arm in the sleeve; "I want you to let me telephone about that Elmhurst Place house and get the refusal of it for a day, anyhow — just for to-day, Van, so that you can see it." Her voice rose: "I *want* you to let me do

that. You don't know anything about the house. If you could *see* it, I *know* you'd think differently. It's so much nearer the Art School, for one thing. Evelyn wouldn't have near so far to walk. She's not strong, you know, Van Cleve; and I'm *afraid* of that long walk for her. I'm afraid it takes her strength so that she can't do her work properly. The other day when she came in her hands were perfectly *numb* with the cold; you must have noticed it at dinner — !”

“Well, they weren't so numb but that she could work her knife and fork all right,” said Van, with a brutal grin; “when they get too bad for that, I'll begin to worry !” And then, seeing the look of outrage on his aunt's face, he added hastily and with earnest kindness; “now look here, Aunt Myra, you know you're just feeling a little restless, that's all that's the matter. You often feel that way, you know. This house is all right. Now don't let's talk any more about this, will you? You know we can't afford to move around. And if any extra money comes in, like that from the farm last week, we ought to save it. We can't go spending it on foolishness. Now let's try to be satisfied and stay here. I'll see if I can't get them to change that wall-paper you hate so,” added poor Van, unconsciously pathetic in his efforts to appease her.

“*Restless !*” ejaculated Mrs. Lucas, indignantly. “Oh, well, I suppose it's useless for me to talk. I might die in this horrid damp hole and Evelyn be hopelessly crippled for life from that walk, and you would still insist that we were just *whimsical* and *restless* — !” But Van Cleve was gone.

Mrs. Lucas returned to her domestic rounds in abysmal low spirits. Her cold was getting steadily worse — she could feel it growing on her ! The air of the house was positively *saturated* with moisture — particularly in the back bedroom with that pink-blue-



green abomination on the walls. It would be her fate to die here, she knew it, she was convinced of it! And the Elmhurst Place house did have such a beautiful bay-window in the hall, and two hardwood floors downstairs! She was ill in bed when Van Cleve came home that evening. Evelyn rushed up and down from the sick-room with tragically repressed grief; Major Stanton sat around in corners out of the way, looking more uncomfortable than alarmed; Mrs. Van Cleve poured the coffee in reproving silence. And when the doctor reported that it looked as if Mrs. Lucas might be going to have grippe, Van Cleve felt like an assassin. It was in vain the unlucky youth told himself that his aunt might have had grippe anywhere, in any house, and that even if he had consented to their moving to Elmhurst Place the very next day, it could hardly have spared her this attack. He felt wretchedly that her illness was all his fault — everything was all his fault — everybody was being made sick and uncomfortable and unhappy by Van Cleve Kendrick and his mean desire to save a little money!

The next time anybody went to call on the Van Cleves, they had moved. They had been over on Elmhurst Place for a month, and *just loved it*, they declared. Evelyn said that her mother had been on the verge of a dreadful attack of influenza, but they got her away from that *polluted* air on Summit Avenue just in time, and she began to mend at once. To be sure this was only two squares off, but there was the most amazing difference in the atmosphere — her mother's case proved it — and really that other house had gotten to be *perfectly awful*, you know.

## CHAPTER VI

### MOSTLY IDLE TALK

THAT there was really something a little unusual about the Van Cleves — always excepting young Kendrick, as I have repeatedly stated — is shown by the fact that in two or three years, more or less, they had become as firmly established socially as if they had lived here all their lives, without anybody ever hinting that they were trying to “*get in*,” or “sniffing” derogatorily, as people did about that unfortunate Jameson girl. The Van Cleve women were a very different stamp. Evelyn and her mother — of course the old lady did not go out much — were invited about a good deal; they were bright, they had the proper manners, and they were pretty sure to make themselves entertaining — sometimes unintentionally. The single thing in the way of their popularity was that it was not easy to tell of these ladies who their friends were, since they changed almost as often as they changed houses; one day they would be embracing people with a warm passage of Christian names and terms of endearment — and the next news you had, they had ceased to speak to So-and-So! She had behaved in such an *underhanded, deceitful, treacherous* way about hiring a cook — she had intimated that Mrs. Lucas’s delicate health was all nerves or hysteria, did you ever hear of anything so *monstrous*? — she was vindictively jealous of Evelyn, etc., etc. Yet they were not without some sound and stable attachments, as for the Gilberts, for instance, with whom they never had any grave falling

out. This, however, may have been partly because of Van Cleve, who, besides being not nearly so quick to make new friends nor so violently enthusiastic about them, was very much more steadfast to the old ones. To be sure, the intimacy of the feminine Van Cleves with Lorrie and her mother was of a somewhat fitful character and subject to wax or wane at any moment without notice; but at one time Miss Lucas was running over to the Warwick Lane house every day. She insisted on helping them with their home dressmaking and millinery; she suggested charming rearrangements of their furniture; she painted a portrait of Lorrie — an amazing water-color portrait wherein Lorrie appeared with a wide, fixed stare goggling at you out of a jungle of chocolate-tinted hair. Mrs. Lucas pronounced it marvellously accurate and a masterpiece, whether considered as a likeness or merely a picture. Lorrie herself laughed and said she supposed you never really knew what you looked like to other people, and were always surprised and disappointed to find out. Bob remarked ruthlessly that those eyes reminded him of two buckeyes in a pan of milk. Van Cleve, upon the work of art being paraded before him, was silent — unwisely, as it turned out, for the severest criticism could not have roused Evelyn or her mother more.

"Well? *Well?* Aren't you going to say anything?" demanded the artist, tartly.

"Why, it — it looks something like her," said Van, feebly. In fact, the thing did have a sort of ghostly resemblance to Lorrie. But what portrait-painter wants to be told that his creation "looks like" the original?

"It was *intended* to look like her," Evelyn said with fine scorn. "But I didn't expect that *you'd* think it was good. No need to ask you!"

"That's so, Evie. If I don't say anything you get mad, and if I do you get mad, so there doesn't seem to

be much need your asking me, sure enough," said Van Cleve, with his unshakable good humor that the women found so hard to "put up with," as they themselves sometimes complained to one another.

"Of course *you* don't think *any* picture of her could be good enough," flashed out Evelyn, jerking the drawing-board back into its corner. "We all know what you think about Lorrie Gilbert, Van." She gave him a savagely significant glance.

"I know you get excited and say a lot of things you don't mean sometimes," Van retorted, coloring, however, with temper — or could it have been some other feeling?

"The *idea*! She's at least a year older than you are — at *least*! And she's engaged to that Mr. Cortwright, anyhow — or as good as engaged!" the young lady pursued, and had the satisfaction of seeing, or fancying she saw, her cousin wince. "That's what everybody says."

"I don't know what you're talking about — I don't know anything about Miss Gilbert's affairs," Van Cleve stuttered, turning redder than ever. He was fairly routed, and got up and stalked out of the house, followed by her inquisitive mockery. Once outside, he said something much stronger — a distressingly strong word of one syllable did Mr. Kendrick utter; and he pulled his hat down over his brows with a morose gesture as he tramped away, without his pleasant whistle for once.

It must have been after this that there occurred one of those intervals of coolness towards the other family on the part of the Van Cleve ladies which people were accustomed to witness. The Gilberts themselves were quite unconscious of it; they were not looking out for slights or indifference, and did not know how to quarrel with anybody. But Evelyn's visits ceased for a while, and perhaps Van Cleve himself did not go to the Pro-

fessor's house in the evenings so often. Mrs. Lucas confided to those who were in high favor just then that she was rather glad of it; she didn't want to be uncharitable, but she could not honestly say that she thought Bob's was a *good influence* for Van Cleve. Of course Van had great *strength of character* and power of *resisting temptation*, still — young men — and here she would break off, giving her audience a wonderfully sagacious, warning look. My old friend, Mr. J. B. B. Taylor happened to pass through the city just then on his large orbit of travel and inspection — J. B. has something to do with a concrete construction company — and I recall a little talk we had on this very subject. It began by my mentioning his last visit, and the group of gentlemen we had met lunching at the Saint Simon; and I reported some observations regarding Van Cleve's family which caused J. B. alternately to smile broadly and wickedly, and anon to grunt "Huh!" in a profound manner. When I had finished: —

"Well," said he, "that Kendrick boy is something of a boy, I judge — considerable of a boy. The fact is, Gebhardt spoke to me about him, — just in the ordinary course of conversation, you know, — but when he found that I knew something of the young man, why, he warmed up and said some very nice things. It seems they gave him a raise at the National Loan the other day; they think a great deal of him. From what I hear, Kendrick's the getting-ahead kind — one of these long-headed, hard-working fellows that knows he can't pick any money off of trees, and expects to buckle down and *make it*. That's a pretty good spirit for these days with all this get-rich-quick feeling in the air. And, speaking of that, I've got an impression that our friend Gebhardt himself is a little given that way — towards experimenting on the get-rich-quick lines, I mean. He's a visionary fellow; I wouldn't trust his judgment very far. Of course I know he's

been quite successful with his little bank, but there's some luck about things like that. If Gebhardt's a self-made man, he didn't pay enough attention to his cupola." And here J. B., evidently feeling that he had allowed himself to run into some indiscretion, abruptly changed topics. "What's become of those other people? That pin-headed masher — *you* know — what was his name? And the other boy?"

I informed him that Mr. Cortwright was still here, in business; I was not certain how successful, but he seemed to have money enough; he was considered very handsome, and — er — well, a little inclined to be — er — sporty — you know; and he was still something of a "masher," to use Mr. Taylor's own elegant phrase. In fact, at one time or another, Mr. Cortwright had been sentimentally attentive to every girl in society, but here latterly he had settled down on Miss Gilbert, and people in general thought this would be a *go*, at last.

"Well, I'm glad she isn't *my* daughter," J. B. commented briefly; "Gilbert, you say? That was that boy's name, I remember now. Is he around still?"

"Yes, it's the same family. Yes, he's here and working. He's been a little wild; they say now he's drinking. I don't know how true it is — may be nothing but gossip," said I, not without reluctance. I liked Bob Gilbert. I never met anybody that didn't like him. But, with the most charitable disposition in the world, I still would have been obliged to acknowledge that one never heard anything creditable about Bob, whereas report concerning his friend, that young Mr. Kendrick (nobody thought of *him* as a boy any longer), justified all that J. B. had said. J. B., indeed, felt a real interest in the latter's fortunes; and he took Van Cleve and the Major (yes, the Major, flowing whiskers, antebellum airs and all!) and the present writer to the Saint Simon next day, and entertained us

regally at luncheon. And he listened with the most appreciative courtesy to Major Stanton's story about his great-grand-aunt, or some other female ancestor, replying to Bishop Whipple's warnings concerning the future life: "Why, Bishop, you and I don't need to be afraid of the Judgment Day, I'm sure. It's going to take them a long while to get down to the W's and V's, you know!"—ha, ha! I came across the same sprightly anecdote in an old joke-book the other day, attributed to Walpole, in conversation with John Wesley. "Why, Mr. Wesley," says Horace; "I'm sure you and I needn't be afraid of the Judgment Day—" etc., etc.

How much truth was there in the rumors that had been circulating somewhat as above reported for the last year or so? To begin with, those sharp hints levelled by Miss Lucas at her cousin, how near the mark did they come? Van Cleve had first met Lorrie Gilbert years before when he was nothing but a big, gangling boy chum of her brother's, and she, although so nearly his own age, already a grown-up young lady. In that far-off time Van looked upon her with both shyness and indifference. Asked if he thought her pretty or bright, he would have replied that he didn't know—he hadn't thought about her at all—he didn't care for girls, and never stayed around where they were, if he could help it. As it happened—indeed, have we not seen it happen under our own eyes?—he did not have much chance to improve or outgrow his deplorable tastes, for that summer was the end of Van Cleve's playtime, and really the end of his boyhood. He could spend no time, still less money, on girls, he who had his family to take care of and his way to make in the world. As he grew older, it became his habit of mind to regard marriage, for a man in his position, as sheer insanity, and falling in love only a milder form of the same affliction. Both must be postponed until he

arrived at the locality which he called to himself, Easy Street. In some vast, indefinite future, when he felt himself "pretty well fixed," and when he could get Grandma and the rest of them comfortably settled somewhere or somehow, so that they would not be quite so much on his mind, when Evelyn would be married, perhaps, and when he could allow them a reasonable income on which they could have a little fun, you know, though, of course, he would have to see that they didn't do anything foolish with it — in the future when Van planned that all this should happen, he sometimes rather diffidently speculated about a home for himself and Somebody. He never divulged these plots and visions even to Bob, his nearest friend; he was very much ashamed of them; he had no notion of complaining about his responsibilities. And as to that other dream, he had never even named his Somebody; to dream is silly enough, but to dream of sharing your life with a person who doesn't exist, seemed to Van Cleve the utter abyss of silliness. His prospective wife was so far a delicious myth; notwithstanding the fact that she was to have brown hair with gold lights in it, hair that waved a little nicely, and big brown eyes, and a fair complexion with a good deal of color in it, and a short nose, straight, but set on so that you were not quite certain whether it did not tilt upward ever so slightly; and she would have a very pleasant laugh, and a pretty round waist, and — and, in short, anybody in whom Van Cleve had confided would have recognized, by the time he got through, a surprisingly good likeness of Miss Lorrie Gilbert!

The young man did not suspect it himself. When he went to the house, he thought in all honesty it was to see Bob. He took a meal there at least once in the week; Mrs. Gilbert was so used to him she sometimes called him "son" forgetfully; Lorrie and he sat on the porch summer evenings, or by the sitting-room hearth



in winter, so completely at home together that they could be silent when and as long as they chose, unembarrassed; it was "Lorrie" and "Van" as a matter of course, and the girl openly regarded him with almost the same feeling as she did her brother, save that she listened and deferred to him far more. Only when Cortwright's name was brought up, or that debonair gentleman came to call, which he was beginning to do with ominous frequency, did the two other young people feel any constraint. Lorrie, in her third or fourth season, had seen something of the world, and been not undesired by young men; her novitiate was over. Nevertheless, she had a way of blushing and brightening at Cortwright's appearance which to any experienced onlooker would have been full of meaning. Van Cleve, at least, saw it with a dull pain of resentment. He told himself that he never *had* liked Cortwright. "I saw enough of *him* down at Steinberger's; you can't fool *me* about that sort of fellow! But, hang it, I believe girls *like* for a man to have the name of being fast!" Van used to think angrily; "you see so many nice, good women married to 'em. It's not so smart to booze and bum, and chase around after women and horses — I can't see what any decent woman is thinking of. I suppose there isn't a man on earth but that's done some things he's ashamed of — but Cortwright! Why, he isn't fit to touch Lorrie's skirt!"

Of course there was nothing personal in this, Van Cleve was convinced; no, merely on principle, simply and solely in behalf of abstract morality, did Mr. Kendrick disapprove of Mr. Cortwright. To have told him he was jealous would have been to invite a righteous indignation. In the meanwhile, whenever Cortwright chanced to call at the same time, his arrival was the signal for a sudden fall in the social barometer. It was not Cortwright's fault; he was always gay, courteous, ready with a joke, a story, a turn at the piano, anything

to make the evening go off well, inimitably good-looking and at ease, in becoming contrast to Van Cleve, who would sit grumpily smoking or grumpily unsmoking, answering in curt and disagreeably plain words, and, after making a wet blanket of himself generally, would get up and go off in pointed hurry. I fear Mr. Kendrick was not poignantly regretted on these occasions. "You seem to take life so seriously, Kendrick. Don't you believe in people having a good time as they go along?" Cortwright once asked him. Cortwright, on his side, met Van Cleve with unvarying good temper and civility — for which, you may believe me, poor Van liked him none the better.

"Nobody but a prig objects to people having fun," he retorted, scowling; "if I'm serious, it's because I'm built that way, I suppose. But I never thought it any of my business what other people do." He looked hard at the other.

"That's lucky for the rest of us," Cortwright said with his easy laugh; "you've got such a severe eye. Hasn't he got a severe eye, Miss Jameson?" And upon this, while the young lady was still looking sideways at him under her lashes, and smiling just enough to show a charming dimple in the corner of her mouth, Van unceremoniously took himself off. He "hadn't much use" (to quote him again) for Miss Paula Jameson, either, and often wished impatiently that she would stop her everlasting running to the Gilbert's.

As for that derogatory tittle-tattle about Bob Gilbert, sad to admit, it was not without foundation. People were beginning to shake their heads over him, and to tell one another that it was too bad! They said that there was nothing really *wrong* with the young fellow — there wasn't any real *harm* in him, only — it was probably not all his fault — the way boys are

brought up has a good deal to do with it — Professor Gilbert was a fine man, a splendid scholar, and all that, but what time he was not absorbed in class work, the poor old gentleman was mooning over his researches, his essays, monographs, what-d'ye-call-'ems — he had no control whatever over his son, and never *had* had! Of course, Mrs. Gilbert and Lorrie could do nothing with Bob — two women, both of them too devoted to him to see where he was going. That his destination was the one popularly known as “the dogs,” everybody was prophesying. Too bad! Of course he might be merely passing through the “wild” stage inevitable to youth; he might straighten up yet — it was to be hoped.

Van Cleve, who knew all about Bob's failings, who had very likely known about them long before they became public talk, never had anything to say on the subject. He would not condemn his friend, but neither would he take the other's part. He would say nothing at all. There was a hard streak in the young man; he was genuinely fond of Bob, yet he avoided his company these days, took care never to be seen on the street with him, got out of his way and kept out of his way, whenever it was possible. “I can't have him coming round here smelling like a distillery, and asking for me. It would queer me for good with some of these solid men,” Van thought; “I can't risk it. And what good would it do him for me to hang on to Bob, anyhow? I can't tell him anything but what he knows already; he's got plenty of sense, if he'll only use it. But if a man's going to make a fool of himself, he's going to make a fool of himself, so what's the use?”

Perhaps he did not fully convince himself by these arguments; but in fact there was no longer much need for him to put his theories in practice. Robert was drifting naturally into his own class of idlers and ne'er-do-weels, and young Kendrick had less and less occasion

to dodge his compromising company, they saw each other so seldom, except at the house. Sometimes, even when at home, Bob was not visible; he had had one of his wretched headaches all day, so that he was obliged to keep his room, Mrs. Gilbert would report so guilelessly that Van Cleve, in spite of his cultivated coldness, winced with pity and a vicarious shame. He noticed that she was looking a great deal older nowadays; there had been a time when you could scarcely tell her back from Lorrie's if you happened to be walking behind her on the street — it was different now. And when it came to Professor Gilbert, it sounded perfectly natural to call him an old gentleman, as we did a moment ago, although he had not yet reached the sixties; he was thinner and bonier than ever, and wrinkled and bent like Father Time himself. *He*, at any rate, understood the headaches, Van Cleve would think, regretfully reading the older man's haggard and weary eyes; and Van wondered with a recoil so strong it surprised himself if the poor father had ever had to go out at night and hunt for Bob — bring him home — get him to bed and sobered up — eh, you know? Good Lord, that *was* pretty bad — pretty bad!

These offices Van Cleve had performed himself once at least. He was much more irritated than scandalized — in the beginning of the adventure, that is — to find Bob drunk and clinging to the lamp post, in the starry winter cold, on his own way home at two o'clock in the morning. What was the notably steady youth, Mr. Kendrick, doing out of his bed at that hour? Have no fear, ladies and gentlemen! In the pursuance of his career of industry and virtue, he had been to the weekly meeting of the Central Avenue Building and Loan Association, in which he held the position of secretary. The proceedings closing about eleven o'clock, Mr. Kendrick had allowed himself a single

chaste mug of musty ale, and a game of pool (a quarter apiece, loser pays for the table) in the company of some of his fellow-officials, and when he started home, an hour or so later, there was a block on the Central-Avenue-and-John-Street line. Already the returning theatre-goers had sped their several ways; the streets and Government Square and the Fountain had taken on a look of Babylonian solitude and desolation. Van Cleve waited for his Elmhill car, within the triangular portico of a corner drug store, where stood another similarly belated gentleman; and they smoked in silence, shrugging and stamping to keep warm. Van remembered forever afterwards how a carriage had rolled by; how he glanced up mechanically as it passed into the contracted illumination of the arc-light, and saw the occupants. He stared; a monosyllabic exclamation was jerked out of him by stark surprise. "Hungh!" he ejaculated unconsciously. The wayfarer who shared the vestibule thought his own attention was being challenged, and obligingly responded. "Peach girl, wasn't she?" he said; and further volunteered; "that hair was a ten-blow, though. Fellow likes it that way, I guess." Van Cleve grunted non-committally, and they lapsed again into silence. Van could never forget this trivial bit of talk, either; he had a photographic impression of the whole incident.

The car came at last; and Kendrick got on and paid his fare and rode to his own corner, pondering, part of the time with a sour smile. "None of my affair, I suppose," was the sum of his reflections. Strictly business — his own business! — had been his motto this long while. He swung himself off the rear step at Durham Street (they moved to Durham Street in the autumn of '96, I believe) and, turning towards home, on the next corner, casually observed a hatless individual sustaining himself with difficulty against the post across the way. "There's a drunk," Van thought;

and then something about the figure drew him to look again with a foreboding interest. He stood still to watch it. There appeared a night-watchman from one of the neighboring apartment buildings and entered into altercation with it. Van crossed the street quickly and went up to them.

"G'wan now, I don't want to run yuh in," the night-watchman was saying benevolently; "yuh gotta git a move on, that's all. Yuh can't stay aroun' here, see? Don't yuh know where yuh b'long?"

"Hello, Bob!" said Van Cleve.

The other stared at him fishily. Bob reeked to Heaven; his clothing exhibited signs of a recent acquaintance with that classic resort of the drunkard, the gutter; his hat had fallen off, and his face showed grimy and discolored in the lamplight. He smiled vacuously. "'Lo!" he said at last thickly; "'s ol' Van Cleve! 'Lo, Van, ol' top, how's shings?"

"Party a friend o' yourn?" inquired the night-watchman.

"Yes, I know him," said the young man, surveying Robert disgustedly.

"Know where he lives?" the night-watchman suggested; "I been tryin' to git it out o' him. I hadn't otter leave m' job, or I'd took him to his home, 'f he's got any."

"It's all right. I'll attend to him," said Van Cleve, shortly. He got hold of Bob by the arm. "Here, I'm going to take you home, Bob," he said. "Look out, you'll fall. That's not your hat. Here, don't you try to get it, I'll get it—" The night-watchman, however, had already captured it out of a pool of half-frozen slush; he rammed out the dents in the crown with his fist, gave it a wipe with a bandanna, and put it back with some nicety on the head of its owner.

"All right now, sport!" said he, falling back a step; and then shook his head to observe Van Cleve's manner

with the drunken man. "Careful, mister! Yuh wanter handle 'em real easy," he warned, as Van Cleve started to march the other away; "they're kinder hard to manage, if they git soured at yuh, y'know!"

"I'm not drunk — s'pose you shink I'm drunk!" said Bob, indignantly. He held back. "I do' wanna g'home *yet*, Van — not *yet*. Dammit, Van, can't y'unnerstan', ol' fellow? I do' *wanna* go home shee Lorrie —" all at once he began to blubber feebly. "Lorrie's bes' girl ever was — bes' sister — *ain't* she bes' sister ever was, Van?"

"You've got to go home, you know, Bob," said Van Cleve, urging him along; "come on, now. It's all right; Lorrie won't know. We'll get in without her knowing — I hope to God!" he added to himself wretchedly. He had seen men drunk before; had laughed at them many times on the stage and elsewhere; had probably once in his life, himself, taken quite as much strong drink as was good for him, like more than one temperate and sensible young man. So now he was not shocked; Bob was Bob, and, whatever he did, immutably his friend; but an impatient anger and distress overwhelmed Van Cleve at the thought of Lorrie. He got Bob home somehow; it was a sorry but after all not so very difficult a task. The unlucky young fellow's natural gentleness and tractability survived even in this degrading defeat. Wine in, truth out; but that enemy could bring nothing brutal or obscene to the surface of Bob's mind; its shallow waters were at least clear. Van got him home somehow, protesting, plaintively apologetic, spasmodically gay, and got him up into the porch with as little scuffling and noise as was possible. The house was dark. "They're all asleep!" Van thought in relief; and succeeded in keeping Bob quiet while he went through his pockets for his night-key. Before he could find it, however, a little light gleamed

over the transom, the door opened almost soundlessly, and Lorrie stood there.

She had a glass hand lamp and held it up, gazing around it into the dark; she seemed unnaturally tall in a white wrapper that drew into folds about her feet; her long, dark hair divided in two wide braids lay smoothly on either side of her face and down over her breast. The young man was reminded startlingly of some painting or image of a madonna he had once seen, long ago.

"Is it you, Bob?" Lorrie said in a whisper; "won't you try not to wake Mother — *Van Cleve!*" Even in her surprise, she governed her voice.

"I've brought him home, Lorrie — I — I found him on the street," said Van, hanging his head. But after her first exclamation, the girl scarcely seemed to take account of him. Her eyes passed over Van Cleve and fell anxiously on her brother, huddled on the old, rickety porch seat; she came a step out of the doorway, shivering as the cold struck her, and clutching together her light draperies.

"Thank you — I — I'm glad it was you, Van," she said brokenly, yet with a self-control that astonished the young man; he looked at her, touched and reverent, as she went on with the same painful strength: "I'm glad it was you — but won't you — won't you please go away now? I can take care of him now he's home. I can't go out and find him — I just have to wait — that's really the — the worst of it, you know. And I don't want Mother to know. If you'll just go away now, Van Cleve, I can manage him. I'm afraid you — you *might* make some noise, and wake them up — you're not used to it, you know," said poor Lorrie, simply.

"I'm not going away, and you're not going to take care of him," said Van Cleve in his harshest manner — though he, too, tried to speak under his breath. He put her aside, and took Bob by the shoulder. "Stand up,



Bob ; you know you can stand up if you try," he commanded savagely.

"Don' you tush my sister!" said Bob in his thick accent. The fancied offence to Lorrie roused him in an extraordinary fashion ; he shook off the other's grasp, and got upon his feet unaided. "You shan't talk that way to Lorrie, I don't care if it is you, Van !" he said quite distinctly ; and then equally unaccountably slipped back to his former state. "Leggo me ! Whash doin' ? G'upstairs m'self," he asserted, mumbling, hiccoughing, wavering. Van Cleve seized and steadied him ; the lamp cast a shaking light over them and over Lorrie's white face and cold, trembling hands ; it was a piece of cheap and squalid tragedy.

"*Please*, Van Cleve, I can take care of him, truly — " she began again, imploringly.

"You shall not !" said Van, roughly. She obeyed him this time, meekly following with the light while Van Cleve propped, pushed, and dragged the other upstairs to his own room, got some of his clothes off and deposited him in the bed, where he lay quite stupid now, and erelong sleeping noisily. His two guardians went cautiously down again. The Gilbert family dog had come to look on, head on one side, wrinkling its honest brow in uncomprehending doggish curiosity and anxiety ; it sniffed at Van's hand inquiringly, recognized him, and retired satisfied to its nightly bivouac across the threshold of Mrs. Gilbert's bedroom. Lorrie stood with her lamp at the door to light the young man's way out.

"What is it ? Is that you, Lorrie ? Are you sick ? What is the matter ?" Mrs. Gilbert waked up suddenly and called. It was a miracle she had not waked sooner. Van Cleve looked at Lorrie, utterly disconcerted.

"Nothing at all, Mother ; nothing's the matter," she called back pleasantly and composedly. "Dingo

seemed to want to get out, and then when I let him out, he began to scratch and whine and make such a fuss, I had to get up and let him in again."

"Oh, I thought — that is —" Mrs. Gilbert paused; there was a moment of blank silence — it was singularly, curiously, blank and silent. "I thought I heard somebody on the stairs — I must have been dreaming," said Mrs. Gilbert with a kind of hurried distinctness and emphasis. "Never mind me, dearie — I — I would have waked anyhow —" her voice ceased suddenly.

"She doesn't *know*, Van — you *see* she doesn't know," Lorrie whispered; it was an appeal. Van Cleve heard the two women lying to each other with wonder and pity. As he looked at Lorrie, on a sudden, for the first time, he saw her face quiver. She put up her hands to hide it, and leaned against the wall, sobbing — but still noiselessly. Van Cleve felt desperately that he would give his right hand, he would give a year out of his life, to take her to him and comfort her — but what comfort would she get from *him*? To go away and leave her in peace was the greatest kindness he could do her! He lingered an instant, helplessly, dumb; even without the risk of detection, he would have been at a loss what to say; so they parted at last without a word.

## CHAPTER VII

### TREATS OF SUNDRY AFFAIRS OF THE HEART

ALTHOUGH the skeleton in the Gilbert family closet was by way of being uncloseted nowadays, was indeed rattling its joints and stalking abroad in the full glare of noonday to the horror of all temperate and well-behaved persons, there was at least one who remained unaffected by the spectacle. The young lady whom people generally referred to as "that Jameson girl," or "that little Paula Jameson" must have known as much about Bob's miserable failing as anybody; but, drunk or sober, good or bad, weak or strong, it was apparently all one to her. She continued to make what the other girls vowed was a "dead set" at the young man. It was impossible to believe, according to them, that she haunted the house so persistently out of fondness for Lorrie. *Everybody* knew (they said) that she had begun her attentions to Bob's sister long ago in the hope of "getting in"; and Lorrie was so *dear* and *sweet* she never had the heart to get rid of her, to say nothing of the fact that that would have been a *job*, because Paula was too thick-skinned to take a hint or feel any ordinary rebuff. But *now*! — it was plain to be seen that she was after Bob. And she would probably get him, too — he was a good deal taken with her. Mercy, nobody else wanted him; still, it was rather a pity, he was so nice when — when he was all right, you know. The family were all so nice, and Lorrie was *lovely*, and they would *hate* such a connection, though of course they would stand it on Bob's account.

What was it that was the matter with Miss Jameson, then? Merely her manners? Our society is not snobbish; doubtless there were people in it no brighter nor better-bred than Paula Jameson, and certainly not nearly so pretty; but it would not swallow her; it would have none of her nor her mother. Yet they were really inoffensive creatures. Mrs. Jameson, to whom at times the girl showed a somewhat disquieting resemblance, was a large, vivid, extraordinarily corseted and high-heeled lady, about forty-five years of age, with the same kind of auburn hair as her daughter's, invariably arranged in the latest fashion, or even a little in advance of the latest fashion; and with a fondness for perfumery and for entire toilettes in shades of purple, lavender, heliotrope, and so on, parasols, gloves, silk stockings, suede shoes, all elaborately matched, wherewith she might frequently be seen upon the streets, bearing herself with a kind of languid *chic* — the word she herself would have used. She was a widow; and the late Mr. Jameson — Levi B. Jameson, Plumbers' Supplies, Sewer-Pipe, Metal Roofing, Etc. — having got together a reasonable fortune in his time, she and Paula were very comfortably off, or would have been if the taste for purple costumes and similar tastes in which Paula also had been trained had not kept them in perpetual hot water, spending and retrenching with an equal thriftlessness. They lived at "private" hotels or fashionable boarding-houses here and there, and went to the theatre a great deal; idling through the rest of their time in shopping, or having their hands manicured and hair dressed, or giving the French bulldog his bath, or yawning over the last lurid novel with a box of chocolate drops in the rocking-chairs of the roof garden or lounge. Their circle of acquaintances was not large; Mrs. Jameson had no social traditions nor aspirations, no hobbies, no recreations, no aim in life at all except to be the best-dressed woman in any assembly, to keep her

weight down to a hundred and thirty-five pounds, and never to miss her tri-weekly "facial" at the beauty parlors she patronized. Paula had never seen her mother do anything, had never known her to be interested in anything but the above subjects, although, to do her justice, Mrs. Jameson was fond of her daughter and gave almost as much attention to Paula's wardrobe and figure and complexion as to her own. It was not strange that the girl could conceive of no different nor more elevated an existence; that is a rare character, the sages tell us, that can be superior to environment, and Paula was not a rare character; she was not especially endowed in any way, except physically. She had been curled, scented, arrayed in slippers too tight, and sashes too wide, and hats too big, like a little show-window puppet, ever since she could remember; had been kissed and petted and admired by other hotel-dwelling women, and noticed and flattered by men until it was natural that the pretty red-gold head should be occupied with Paula's self, with her beauty and her "style" and, above all, her irresistible attraction for every trousered human being she saw, to the exclusion of all else. Why not? She *was* attractive. She had no talents nor accomplishments; but she had been to two or three of the most select and fashionable schools; she spent infinite pains on her dress with charming results; she could not talk at all, but she could always *look*, as Bob Gilbert himself had said; she was very pliable and good-tempered, ready to laugh at any joke she could understand, and to enter into any plan; what more could have been asked of her, or why should she not have been satisfied with herself?

Why little Miss Paula should have taken the fancy she apparently did to the Professor's daughter, who made her own clothes and trimmed her own hats, who could cook a dinner or play a two step with equal facility, who had ten times more sense and a hundred

times more heart, who was five years older, and more mature at twenty-three than Paula would be at fifty — why the girl should have taken such a liking to Lorrie, it was for a long while impossible for the latter to guess. But Miss Jameson attached herself to Lorrie with the funny perseverance of a home-seeking kitten, *would* come to see her, *would* write her notes by the ream, and telephone by the hour, if she had been allowed this last indulgence. Lorrie was too humane to throw her off, which, besides, as the other girls hinted, was no easy matter; and Miss Gilbert grew finally to feel a sort of maternal fondness and a certain responsibility for the childish, pretty young creature, even after the other had ingenuously and quite unconsciously revealed the secret of her devotion. "It's so nice for you having a brother — a grown-up one, I mean — like Bob, isn't it? There're always such a lot of men coming to the house all the time — so nice! You have ever so many more men than any of the other girls. It's just lovely here — there's always *somebody*!" she said one day, and wondered why Lorrie, after a moment's meditative pause, looking at her oddly the while, suddenly broke into a little laugh; all her face twinkled; she laughed and laughed.

"What's funny? What's the joke?" demanded Paula, lazily interested; she picked up a hand-glass, and moved closer to the window.

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light!" said Lorrie, profanely, reducing her expression to one of prodigious gravity on the instant; and Paula at the bureau, painstakingly examining a minute speck on the right side of her chin which she dreaded might be the beginning of a pimple, did not attempt to follow her friend's abrupt changes of mood. Besides, Lorrie, like nearly everybody else, was forever making speeches which Paula found it too fatiguing even to pretend to understand.

For my own part, I should not have fancied Miss Jameson much, after this naïve revelation of character. To run after and cultivate another girl, because she happens to be popular with the young men of her circle! There is a kind of silly calculation about it. But Lorrie was only amused; she took a mischievous delight in drawing Paula out, and would repeat their conversations to her mother afterwards, fetching a smile even to the older woman's troubled face. They were kind-hearted; they would say "Poor Paula!" to each other in the very midst of their laughter.

"Of course *all* the men aren't nice; but it's nice to have them come to call on you, anyhow —" (thus Miss Jameson, according to Lorrie's report) — "I'd feel awfully if I never had a caller. There's a girl at The Alt. —" (the young lady's abbreviation of "The Altamont," that being the name of the caravanseraï which sheltered the Jamesons at the moment) — "that I don't believe has ever had a bit of attention in her life — not the least, little tiny *scrap*! I'd feel awfully in her place, wouldn't you? Momma — I mean Mama — Mama says any girl that hasn't had a proposal before she's twenty is a *freak*. I said to her, 'Well, that lets *me* out! I'm safe, anyhow!' Momma — Mama simply screamed; she's been telling everybody in the hotel. I don't care. It's true, you know. I'm going on twenty-three, and I've had four — I mean not counting college boys when you're away in the summer and all that. I never count them, though lots of girls do. I don't care for boys — I'd rather have *men*. One of mine has stacks of money; he's in the shoe business in Springfield, Massachusetts, and used to come around and stop at The Alt. regularly four times a year, getting up trade at the stores, you know. He don't come any more, though, since I turned him down. I don't think the shoe business would be very stylish, somehow, do you? It wouldn't be like saying your husband

was president of a bank, or something. He did give me lovely things, though." She sighed reminiscently. "He gave me my silver toilet-set — all except those two big cologne bottles with the silver deposit on cut glass. Another man gave me those. I priced them afterwards at Dormer's and they're fifteen dollars apiece. Isn't it funny how men just love to spend money on you? I had a fellow once that gave me the cutest little watch — one of the real little ones, not any bigger than *that*, you know, dark blue enamel with pearls all over it, and a little flure-de-lee pin to match — too cute for anything. I'll show it to you some time when you're over. I wish you'd come over; you always say you will, and then you never do."

"You don't mean to say you *took* those men's presents?" ejaculated Lorrie, ungrammatically.

"Why, yes. Why? Wouldn't you have? They're *lovely* things — they're all *real*, you know, the pearls on the watch and everything. I wouldn't have 'em a minute if they weren't. I hate anything *common*. But wouldn't you have taken them? The men were simply *gone* about me, you know, just *crazy*."

"Mother wouldn't have let me," Lorrie stammered, trying, in her quick humanity, to make some explanation that might not hurt the other's feelings. But Paula looked at her with no feeling more pronounced than surprise.

"I should think you'd take 'em, and just not tell her," she remarked; "you can always say you saved up and bought 'em out of your own money, or some girl in Seattle or somewhere 'way off sent 'em to you. Momma don't know about *all* my things. I like to have presents from men. I can't see there's any harm in it." A curious hardness came into her face; she eyed the older girl with something like cunning, an expression as uncanny on Paula's soft, dimpled features



as it would have been on a five-year-old baby's. "Didn't anybody ever give you anything?"

"No," said Lorrie, shortly, annoyed.

"Pooh, you just won't tell. I think you might *me*, though — I wouldn't give you away. You've had ever so many men awfully gone on you, everybody says. I love to hear them talk and go on that *soft* way, don't you? I think you might tell *me*. There's V. C. K. — you know who I mean — you needn't pretend you don't."

"V. C. K. ? *Oh!*" said Lorrie, crimsoning ; "please don't say things like that, Paula. He's just Bob's friend. It doesn't seem fair to a man to — to talk like that. Even if it were true, it sounds — it sounds —" she stopped, hampered for words the other could understand without offence ; she could not say to Paula that it sounded cheap and common. "I wouldn't do it, if I were you," Lorrie said finally.

"Seems to me there's a lot of things you won't do," Paula said suspiciously. "Everybody knows it — about Van Kendrick, I mean. He comes here to *see you*. He isn't such a tremendously good friend of Bob's ; they don't go around together nearly as much as they used to."

Lorrie did not answer ; her face clouded unhappily.

"Well, if he hasn't ever come right out and asked you, I suppose it's because of his family," suggested Paula, comfortingly, misreading the other's silence and look of trouble ; "I suppose he thinks he can't afford to get married. I don't like him much, anyhow. He's always so — so — well, so grumpy and grouchy, you know. He always shoots right by you on the street, and just grabs off his hat and jabs it on again as if he was afraid for his life to stop and speak for fear he'd have to ask you to go to lunch with him, or pay your car fare or something. He never does offer to take a person anywhere, to the theatre or anything. He's

awfully stingy. Oh, I don't suppose he's that way with *you*. But I just hope you won't take him, Lorrie."

"I told you there wasn't any question of that," said Lorrie, not too amiably. She was tired of listening to all this dull, distasteful stuff. If she was not at all in love with Van Cleve Kendrick, she still thought him a deal above Miss Jameson's criticism. Paula only shrugged, and turned her attention to her finger nails. After a while she said, without raising her eyes, "Mr. Cortwright's getting to come pretty often, too, isn't he?"

"Not any more than anybody else," said Lorrie; and now she, too, kept her eyes down.

"I thought he seemed to be here every time I happen to come over — in the evenings, you know," said Paula, who indeed "happened" to come over in the evenings two or three times a week with striking regularity; there crept into her eyes that same look of babyish sharpness that had showed there a while before. "I noticed it because two or three times he's taken me home," she said explanatorily.

"Yes?" said Lorrie, engrossed in her embroidery.

"Why, yes, don't you remember? It was when Bob was out or sick, so *he* couldn't," said Paula, more explanatorily still. She went on quickly with a good deal of emphasis: "I just said to myself, 'Well, if I'd known *you* were going to be here, I'd have stayed home!' You know I don't like Mr. Cortwright, either, Lorrie—I don't like him a *little* bit!" She paused, slightly out of breath, glancing narrowly into her companion's face; but Lorrie's eyes were still lowered, and at the moment she was matching two skeins of pink floss with elaborate care, so that if Miss Jameson had counted on these statements making some visible impression, she was disappointed. "I just *hate* him!" she announced vigorously.

"Oh, poor Mr. Cortwright!" said Lorrie, with a kind of absent-minded laugh, deciding on the darker shade at last.

The other girl scrutinized her silently. "Do *you* like him?" she suddenly demanded.

"Oh, *yes*. He's always been very nice to Bob, you know," said Lorrie, maintaining her light tone, but furious inwardly to feel the red coming into her cheeks. It was ridiculous to be dragging in Bob this way to account for every man that came to the house; she began to laugh, a little nervously.

Paula looked at her again uncertainly. "Well, *I* hate him!" she repeated; "I've never even asked him in when we got to The Alt., or asked him to call, or anything." Again Paula considered, or, at least, had the appearance of considering, though it would have been hard to believe that any operation of so much consequence was going on behind that lovely, inanimate mask. "He don't like me, either — Mr. Cortwright just hates me, I know it," she said, eying Lorrie expectantly. "He just took me home those times because he *had* to." Lorrie made an inarticulate sound of dissent, and went on with her fancy work assiduously.

"Does he ever say anything to you about me?" asked Paula.

"Why, yes — no — I don't know — sometimes — I suppose we talk about everybody once in a while —" said Lorrie, rather confusedly. Mr. Cortwright had not been overcomplimentary in his references to Miss Jameson. But the latter, who candidly liked to occupy the limelight and the centre of the stage, and in general would rather have heard that she had been severely reviewed, even lacerated, by the gossips, than that they had passed her over with no notice at all, nevertheless looked not disturbed at the neglect Lorrie implied.

"Mr. Cortwright don't like me," she insisted again.

According to legend, two pairs of ears should have been burning pretty smartly while the above conversation went on; we may imagine that the first gentleman under discussion, could he have overheard Miss Jameson, would have dismissed her estimate of his character easily enough, however angered or annoyed by the rest of the discourse. Van Cleve was not of a temper to be much ruffled by the accusation of stinginess and rudeness. Very likely it was near the truth; and he himself might have explained that he didn't have any time for attentions to girls, and his money came too hard to be spent plentifully. He had a use for every dollar; and by Somethingquitestrong, if that young lady had ever *made* a dollar, she'd think differently! Also he would have said — with a red face — that that was all rot about himself and Miss Gilbert. As for Cortwright, the fact is, "poor Paula" had hit upon the truth itself in those last remarks of hers, for he had confessed as much to Lorrie! The girl bored him to death, he had said with great plainness and energy. Pretty, of course, but there was absolutely nothing to her! He did wish she'd give up this running after Bob, and let the house alone. He, too, spoke of the times he had been obliged to take her home — he couldn't get out of it, you know — didn't want to be rude, but really —! He was lightly and humorously eloquent on the subject of Miss Jameson.

"I think you are a little hard on poor Paula," Lorrie remonstrated, coming to the defence more out of sex loyalty than from any feeling for the other girl. "You ought to make allowances for the way she's been brought up. It's perfectly pathetic when you stop to think about it. No real *home*, and no real *mother* —"

"*What!* No mother? Oh, come now, Miss Gilbert, you surely know Mrs. Jameson, don't you? You've seen her, anyway? Ah, I see, that's it! You *do*

know Mrs. Jameson!" said the gentleman, meaningly, with a lazy laugh.

"I didn't mean to say that — I didn't say that exactly. I meant her mother doesn't — isn't — well, she's not like *some* mothers, you know," said Lorrie, lamely, between her habitual desire to be charitable, and a strong disapproval of Mrs. Jameson. Cortwright understood her and laughed again.

"Mrs. Jameson isn't much like *your* kind of mother," he said; and added, "there aren't many like you among the daughters, either, for that matter," with the faintly caressing emphasis of which he had the secret. It made Lorrie's face grow warm even in the dark, as they sat on the porch of a midsummer night. They were sitting in their customary positions; that is, Lorrie leaning back against the pillar, with her white skirts flowing down, and her small, capable hands for once idle in her lap; and Cortwright, on the step below, bending towards her in one of those cavalier attitudes into which he fell more or less unaffectedly; he was naturally graceful in his movements; and the sword and mantle of the cavalier day would have set upon him as suitably as its light and swaggering morals. Sometimes his hand or foot touched hers accidentally — or tentatively; but as to any of the sentimental advances which he was reported to practise, the young man seldom attempted them with Lorrie Gilbert. The fellow that tried to kiss her would *get his*, he sometimes thought in his profanely modern speech; and was startled to feel a thrill of anger, resentment, jealous desire, dart through him at this purely speculative person's act. He was beginning to be much more in earnest than he had ever dreamed of being; certainly than he had ever been before with any of the women he had encountered throughout his easy, conquering, not too scrupulous, career. Also he was perfectly well aware that rumor bracketed their two names; and let it go undenied, keeping

silence but smiling in a style calculated to support the talk, if anything. In reality, it at once flattered and disconcerted him; he was not sure that he was so much in earnest as all that, he said to himself, half complacent and half alarmed. Getting married, you know — ! And, anyhow, what did *she* think? What *did* she think? For the first time in his life, a healthy self-distrust invaded him. The very candor of Lorrie's liking at once defeated and spurred him on. And now, as he sat beside her, sensing, as often before, to his own wonder and enchantment, an ineffable comfort, restfulness, and content, physical, spiritual, he did not know which, in her presence and nearness, a sudden small anxiety overtook him.

"I imagine Miss Jameson tells you all about her love-affairs — what *he* said and what *she* said, and all the rest of it," he said; "she's had a good many, probably."

"Oh, yes," said Lorrie, indulgently; and she laughed. Cortwright was relieved at her tone and laughter. Even if Paula — even if any girl, hadn't enough sense to keep her mouth shut, she would have enough cunning, he thought, secure in his knowledge of the sex.

"After all, it would be a pretty good thing if Bob fell in love with her. It would do him good to get his mind set on some girl, I believe," he said, in a kind, elder-brother fashion that touched Lorrie deeply.

"That's what I've often thought," she said impulsively; "that's what I've often longed for. Mother and I — we can't do much — he's too used to us — a man doesn't seem to care much what his mother and sisters think about him. He knows they're going to love him, anyhow. But if Bob would only get to caring for some girl — Paula or anybody — if he'd *only* — instead of —" Lorrie's voice failed; all the pain and worry of these past few months when things, already so bad, seemed to be getting so much worse, suddenly knotted together in her throat. She turned her face

away, sternly resolved to control herself. "I'm getting silly and hysterical, laughing one minute and wanting to cry the next!" she thought impatiently. Indeed, she had been under a hard strain for some time now.

The man, who knew well enough what the trouble was, looked at her and then down, a little shamed, a little humbled. Bob's misbehavior surely could not be laid to his door; but a sharp regret stung him. "Men don't deserve to have sisters and mothers and — and wives!" he declared huskily, not conscious of the irrelevance of the words until they were out; and both of them were awkwardly silent an instant. Cortwright looked into her face again, and saw that the brown eyes shone suspiciously in the moonlight, as with unshed tears. He gave an exclamation.

"Don't do that, Lorrie, don't! I — I mean, don't worry about Bob so!" he stammered, moved by a genuine, self-forgetful sympathy and pity. He took her hand; he kept on with reassuring and comforting words. "Bob's all right — he's going to come out all right. He'll get over this running around, you know, and — er — and coming in late at night, and — er — and all that. Why, there're lots of fellows worse than Bob —"

"I know that, Mr. Cortwright, but that doesn't make it any easier," said Lorrie, brokenly; she swallowed hard, and went on without looking at him. "I'm sure Bob wouldn't — wouldn't do anything wrong, even when he's — when he's *that way*, you know. But it's been so long now it seems as if maybe he never would get over it. That's what frightens me. It began when he was only a little boy; he used to drink the peach-brandy. Sometimes he drank it all up. When I found out, I never told Mother, and I never said a word to him. I'd go and fill the jug up with syrup. I suppose it was wrong, but I — I didn't know any better. To this day, I don't know whether Mother

knows or not. I should just as lief stick the carving-knife into her as ask — or tell her. She might think it was her fault because of having the peach-brandy around, you see —” She drew her hand away quickly; she was frightened at her own loss of self-control, frightened at her sudden longing to cry her troubles out on the young man’s shoulder.

“Oh no, no, don’t get to thinking things like that. That’s morbid, that’s foolish!” Cortwright urged, honestly moved; and none the less because the peach-brandy episode seemed to him an ordinary boyish crime, fit only to be laughed at; its very littleness touched him. “It isn’t anybody’s fault. Nearly all men have some kind of a time like this. Bob will come around all right. Why, he’s a fine fellow, a splendid fellow — he’s going to be all right —” he uttered these consolations with entire sincerity, even if, in reality, he had no convictions about Bob whatever, and would have acknowledged to another man that the outcome of young Gilbert’s career was very dubious. He felt with a strange tangle of emotions, surprise, conceit, satisfaction, and something as near to real tenderness as he could entertain, that this sad business about Bob brought Lorrie and himself closer together than a year of visits and attentions and frank, pleasant intimacies had been able to do. And now, as always when he was with her, Lorrie unwittingly called out all that was best in him. He was very gentle, governing his impulses in honest respect, made a great many fine forcible promises to “look after Bob,” to “see if *he* couldn’t do something with Bob,” to “get Bob to straighten up,” etc.; and went away from her at last in a very noble, protecting, ardent, and exalted state of mind, highly unusual and agreeable. He was resolved to straighten up, not only Robert, but Philip Cortwright, too. For such a girl, a man ought to be willing to do anything! He would cut out that other



affair altogether; it would begin to tire him pretty soon, anyhow; he would go on the water wagon himself, drop the ponies, marry Lorrie, and settle down! And doubtless Lorrie went upstairs to her room soothed and sustained and full of trust in him; doubtless, too, she blushed to face herself in the glass when she thought of certain passages, certain intonations of "his" voice, certain expressions in "his" eyes; and combed out and braided her long, thick, waving crop of brown hair in a pensive mood which had nothing to do with that unfortunate Robert; and maybe sat awhile by the window with her chin propped on her hands staring and star-gazing and dreaming while the family snored unromantically all about her, before she slipped into her own little bed.

At the same time, not many squares away, another acquaintance of ours may have been indulging in a very similar style of meditation, and surveying what she could of the night and stars from the window of *her* bedroom — a stuffy hotel bedroom that commanded a much better view of the rear roofs and fire-escapes and the windows of other stuffy bedrooms than of anything celestial. Within are odors of toilet waters and stale roses; you may hear a bell-boy padding along the corridor accompanied by a chinking of ice-water pitchers; near at hand the elevator grinds slowly up, and anon grinds slowly down. The young lady in a heavily embroidered lavender crepe kimono somewhat too roomy for her — it is part of her mother's wardrobe, in fact — has been stealthily reading and rereading a number of little notes received with sundry boxes of candy or perhaps with those other more costly "presents" for which she has a weakness; she has by heart every word of those notes. They are "soft" and sugary enough even for her taste, and fascinatingly seasoned besides with hints of mystery, secrecy, and caution. This affair quite puts in the shade the honest

gentleman of the shoe business and others who have been vulgarly plain and above board about their admiration and their hopes! It has progressed from chance meetings at first to meetings that were not by any means chance, on her part at any rate, later; and now to risky little appointments, delightful stolen moments, subtly planned encounters — exactly like a play! Indeed, was there ever a finer figure for a *matinée* hero seen on any stage than the individual signing himself *hers*, Phil?

Momma — no, deliver us! *Mama* calls crossly and drowsily from the next room to know what on earth she is doing, and why doesn't she go to bed? The light is right in the older lady's eyes, it appears. So the younger springs up dutifully and turns it out; and lies down; and is soon sleeping sweetly as becomes her youth and innocence, and her stainless, untroubled conscience.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INDUSTRIOUS APPRENTICE

"THE rolling stone gathers no moss," and "The setting hen never gets fat" are two worthy old proverbs not less true, it would seem, for being diametrically contradictory; and liable, like most proverbs, to excite the retort that everything depends on the individual. For instance, there was Van Cleve Kendrick, after some five years at the bank, as solid a fixture as its marble steps or safe-deposit vaults, the very reverse of a rolling stone; yet no supine and starveling setting hen, for all that. On the contrary, the young fellow was considered unusually active, shrewd, self-reliant, and capable; his integrity was above question; his ability such as to put him "right in line for promotion," according to what people heard. Indeed, the president of the National Loan, Mr. Gebhardt himself, was the original source of this rumor. He was an enthusiastic man, a big, blond, fine-looking man with the heavy beard and roving, distant blue eyes of a Viking, and when he came out with one of his strong encomiums about "my young friendt Van Cleef Kendrick" in his deep and melodious bass voice with the faint German accent which he always betrayed in moments of earnestness or excitement, the effect was very impressive and convincing. But even without Mr. Gebhardt's indorsement, Van Cleve would probably have earned the same reputation. At twenty-seven years of age, Mr. Kendrick held eight shares in the National, on which he had paid a third of what he had borrowed to buy them;

he had six hundred dollars laid by; he was drawing a salary of twenty-three hundred a year, and making a little "on the side," in the management of various small savings and bits of real estate for half a dozen or more of those same honest hucksters, seamstresses, dairymen, and so on<sup>1</sup> whom he had used to watch coming in with their deposits Saturday nights; he had put his cousin Evelyn through the Art School, and given her an extra twelvemonth of study in New York; he had been supporting a family for years, if not in luxury, certainly in ordinary comfort. At twenty-seven, also, Van's hair was thinning a little on the temples, there was a hard line at the corner of his flat, straight mouth, another between his eyebrows. Since he began to work, he had seldom had, and never asked for, a vacation, even of a week, even of a day; Sundays and holidays he looked upon as a more or less unnecessary evil. There he stuck at his desk or at and about kindred desks and offices, cool, steady, briefly civil, ageing before his time, an edifying example of American thrift and industry — yet I know one person, at least, to whom there was something not far from pathetic in the spectacle. Youth's a stuff that can't endure; and what was Van Cleve doing with his, he who had almost forgot how to play, who took his leisure so rarely and grudgingly, who made friends among men old enough to be his father, and never looked at a woman except to get out of her way? What was he doing with these beautiful, unreturning days, and what, *what* would he be doing at sixty or seventy-five? He was providing

<sup>1</sup> I never quite understood how Van Cleve came to be so well acquainted among these people; but a remark of my laundress, a respectable colored woman whom I have employed for years, throws some light on the point. "Mistah Kendrick? Lawzee, I knows *him*; I've knowed him evah sence he was a beginnah, befo' dey done had de trouble at de bank, yass'm'," she said; "I used to peek through dem little gold wires, an' see him settin' there, figurin', an' dat young man was p'intedly so pernicious at his duties, it 'tracted me, yass'm'."

against that very time! "It's a bad thing to be old," he used to say in his dry and cold way; his manner may have inspired confidence and respect, but it was never gracious; "it's a bad thing to be old," says Joshua Van Cleve's grandson; "but it's the worst thing that can happen to be *poor* and old!"

The young man, with all his harshness, took care not to betray any such opinion to his family, all of whom, setting aside Evelyn, were well under way in years; if old age would not find them in poverty, that was owing solely to Van Cleve's own efforts,—a fact, however, of which he never would have dreamed of reminding them, even if he himself had fully realized it. He was of the temper to work hard and direct his affairs with economy and prudence, without any need or incentive whatever; and it was with a kind of satirical patience that he received, or rather endured, the devotion and admiration of his domestic circle. "Why, Grandma, you've got me down fine, haven't you? And of course you're a pretty good judge of men at your time of life and with all your experience!" he would say, in reply to the old lady's half-tearful eulogies: "I'm a hero and a saint, and the biggest thing on top of the ground. You say so, and you ought to know. My services to the bank are invaluable; I don't believe they could find more than forty or fifty bright young men to fill my place, in case —"

"Oh, don't talk that way, Van!" cried his Aunt Myra, aghast at this suggestion; "if you should lose your position —!" Her eyes roved wildly over the pretty, comfortable room; in a trice she saw it a garret, a hovel, an almshouse, and herself and Evelyn starving in rags! "You — you don't think they're going to discharge you, *do* you, Van Cleve?" she said, trembling.

"Why, not that I know of. I guess I'll stay with

the job a while yet," said Van, amused, reading her easily, perhaps somewhat contemptuously; he knew his aunt to be a sincerely good woman, and he supposed that all good women contrived to be not at all self-indulgent, yet thoroughly selfish, after her fashion. "Don't fly off the handle that way," he said; "I'll always manage to take care of you somehow or other, Aunt Myra."

"Well, I hope *I* count for *something*," interposed Evelyn, haughtily; "I expect to do *something* with my brush. I think I've shown there's *something* in me already, for that matter, getting a picture in the Women's Art League Exhibit with that awfully critical jury that refused some of the most *famous* artists in Ohio —"

"And Ohio's the banner State for artists, too!" said Van Cleve, wagging his head solemnly.

"Well, but it's so, Van Cleve, you needn't belittle it that way. You don't know how much it means. Everybody keeps saying to me, 'Why, your reputation's *made* now, Miss Lucas; you've reached the *top*!' They don't *have* to say it, you know, so I know they mean it. And I've told you how jealous some of the *failures* are — girls that used to be in the same classes with me here, and ever so many of the women that are considered pretty high up — that couldn't get their pictures in, you know; why, the very fact that they *are* so jealous of me just *shows* there's *something* in my work, doesn't it, Mama? They say the meanest, *cat-iest* things, like hinting that Mr. Keene — he's on the jury, you know, the most important one of them all — is crazy about me, and would let any old daub in, if he thought I did it. Of course, I wouldn't admit to anybody that he *is*," said Evelyn, with becoming reticence; "but I do him the justice to *know* that his feeling about me doesn't make the slightest difference; he's too great an artist and too fine and noble to let

anything *personal* influence him. But he told me himself that I need have no fears for the future —”

“All right, Rosa Bonheur, you get busy ‘with your brush’ and stave off the poorhouse when the time comes, will you? In the meanwhile, I may as well keep on working,” said Van Cleve, cutting her short with the good-humored indifference his cousin found so exasperating. Many a genius has suffered thus from a lack of appreciation in the family; and I fear Evelyn was no fonder of Van Cleve because he had contributed to her artistic education with unhesitating liberality, perhaps at the cost of some scrimping and self-denial; nor did she like him any the better for having forgotten all about these sacrifices, or for holding them of no moment. Yet she was not ungrateful; all that she wanted was for him to take her seriously — and he refused to take her seriously! It was obvious that he left her and her talents and her achievements out of his reckoning altogether; the girl could have forgiven an offensive scepticism more easily.

“All you think about is *money*, Van Cleve Kendrick!” she burst out angrily; “that’s the only *standard* you’ve got. If I sold a picture for seventy-five or a hundred dollars, you’d believe I could paint — you’d think I was *worth while*!”

“You bet I would!” Van Cleve agreed heartily, if somewhat absently; he had got out his fountain-pen, and, sitting at the little old-fashioned black walnut desk in the corner of the dining-room, was running over the monthly bills which Mrs. Lucas always collected together and bestowed in a certain old Japanese lacquer box to await pay day. “Oughtn’t there to be a bill here from Doctor McCrea?” said Van, looking up; “he generally sends it at the half year.”

No one answered immediately; and to his surprise Van Cleve detected a conscious glance pass among the three women. His grandmother spoke at last. “Eve-

lyn has arranged about that bill," she said proudly and at the same time rather timidly; "it was forty-five dollars, and Evelyn went to see the doctor and arranged to pay it herself."

Van Cleve turned his light gray eyes on the girl. "How?" he asked. "How are you going to pay it?" He looked interested. "Did you save it up yourself, Evie? By George, that's pretty good!"

"Never mind, Van dearest, we didn't want to bother you with it; we weren't going to say a word to you about it," his aunt cried out, in a hectic excitement. "You're always so splendid and honorable, we knew you'd pay the doctor and go without a new spring suit — and you *ought* to have a spring suit, you said so yourself the other day. And we couldn't bear to have you disappointed; it's a perfect shame the way you deny yourself all the time, and you have all of us hanging around your neck like millstones." Her eyes filled up; she almost sobbed the next words. "So Evelyn thought out a p-plan, and she went to see the doctor, and — *you* tell him, Evie — oh, Van, she is the *noblest* girl!"

"I simply suggested that I could pay him with a picture, Van," said Evelyn, not without complacency. "I told him that I had three that had been exhibited and very highly spoken of, and he could have his choice. You know any one of them is worth ever so much more than his bill, Van," said Evelyn, earnestly; "but of course I didn't tell him that right out in so many words. Only I thought it wasn't any harm to let him know that they were very valuable, and that he wasn't getting cheated. He said he didn't know much about pictures. So I just told him in a general sort of way, you know, what I would ask for these, and I could see he was perfectly astonished and very much impressed. I'm going to send the pictures over to-morrow for him to pick out. It's that 'View of



Paradise Park by Moonlight,' and 'Over the Rhine,' and that lovely 'Bend in the River; Fort Thomas —'"

"Have you got his bill?" interrupted the other; and, the document being produced, Van Cleve silently folded it away in his letter case alongside the rest with an expression that somehow disconcerted the little assembly.

"I think you'd better give up this — this arrangement, Evelyn," he said unemotionally. "I'll send the doctor a check to-day. I'd rather you didn't pay any bills that way."

"Why, Van, why not?" Evelyn protested; "oh, of course, I *see*! You think my paintings aren't worth forty-five dollars. You think they aren't worth anything. You don't realize that my pictures are just the same as money."

"Maybe so. You couldn't pay the butcher with 'em," said Van Cleve — a remark that momentarily silenced argument. He rose, the three women staring at him hurt, angry, bewildered. "Now look here, Evelyn," he said, not unkindly; "you're not to do anything like this again, you understand me? I'm not saying anything against your pictures; they may be worth all you claim. But they aren't the same as money, not by a long sight. I look after a little piece of property for a man that's a marble-cutter over here on Gilbert Avenue; what would you think if he offered to pay me with a statue of Psyche, hey? Now I know you want to help me, but that's not the way to do it — to go and bunko somebody into taking one of your pictures in return for his work that he's trying to make his living by. Sell your picture first, and do what you want with the money —"

"*Stop*, Van Cleve! Don't you see you're breaking her heart!" Mrs. Lucas screamed, starting to her feet and rushing to throw her arms around her daughter; both of them were sobbing vehemently. "How *can*

you talk so? How *can* you be so brutal?" She faced him in tragic indignation. "If it had been any other man, anybody but you, Van Cleve, I'd say he ought to be *horse-whipped* —!"

"Don't, Mother darling, don't! Now she'll have one of her heart attacks — Van, how *could* you —!" proclaimed Evelyn in her turn; Mrs. Van Cleve ran for the smelling salts; the maid whirled in from the kitchen; there was a terrifying to-do; in the midst of it, the young man, who was not unfamiliar with this sort of scene, made his escape. He was so little moved by the distress he left behind that he even grinned to himself as he took his way down town, thinking, "I'd like to have seen McCrea's face when Evie handed him that gold brick!" Apart from performances of this nature, which were likely to be annoying, Mr. Van Cleve attached scarcely any importance to what women said and did; all women, he supposed, were hysterical fools — ahem! — well, not that exactly, but ill balanced and excitable and reasonless — all but one, that is. Van had seen enough of Lorrie Gilbert to know that she, at least, could control herself and act to good purpose when need arose.

He thought about Lorrie a good deal these days, tried to put her out of his mind, and found it returning to her again and again with a commingled pain and pleasure which he now at last understood. As usual he was ruthlessly clear-eyed and clear-headed about it, ruthlessly plain spoken with himself. He knew that he was nothing to Lorrie; she had never encouraged him; if Van Cleve had ever assumed a definitely lover-like attitude, she would have denied him with real distress and regretted keenly the lost friend; and, besides, she was credibly reported engaged to another man. Van worked harder than this other man, and he made as much money; if not so ornamental to the community, he was a deal more useful; he was the

Good Apprentice and the worthy steward; but *he* could not marry. Even had Lorrie been as much in love with him as he with her, he could not have asked her to marry him. His sense of duty and his hard pride would have restrained him. "I'm not going to ask any girl to live with my family — I'm not going to put that on her, and I'm not going to ask her to 'wait for me,' either," was his idea; "I don't want anybody taking a chance on *me*. What would that be, anyhow, but hinting to her to hang on till some of my people died off and left me a little freer? Not for me! When I'm making ten thousand a year will be time enough for marrying. Lorrie'll be a grandmother by that time, most likely! Oh, well!" he sometimes finished with a touch of his harsh fun. Mr. Kendrick did not lack a gift of philosophy; and it was equally characteristic that he never for an instant doubted he would some day make that ten thousand a year and much more.

In the meanwhile, life was not uninteresting even to a hopeless lover — a lover, that is, with as hard a head, and as staunch a digestion as this hero's. This very day, when Van caught the next down-going car, he found its crowded passengers reading the latest news from the insurrection in that neighboring West Indian island of which we were beginning to hear so much in those days, and conclamantly airing their views on the subject. "DOOM OF HAVANA SEALED! GENERAL GOMEZ CAPTURES THE WATERWORKS!" one man read out of the paper; "that settles it, boys!" he announced with much solemnity; "the Spanish'll have to give up now. They can't get any washing done!" And everybody laughed, and another remarked that he had never understood the Spanish were very strong on laundry work, anyhow. Van Cleve, clinging to his strap, listened inattentively; this kind of talk was rife that winter — had been going the rounds, indeed, for

the past year. Do we not all remember it? The United States ought to interfere — No, *sir*, what business was it of ours? Let 'em take care of their own troubles; we had enough to keep us busy with ours already. — Well, the first thing you know, some other nation would come along, Great Britain, for instance, and settle the whole business by taking Cuba away from Spain once for all. How would we like *that*? If the island belonged to anybody, it ought, logically, to be *us*. — Well, I'm against imperialism on principle. This talk about the Monroe Doctrine is all bosh. We've never had occasion to butt into anybody else's quarrel. Look how Cleveland put his foot in it with that Venezuela fuss — Yes, but this was different; think of those wretched Cubans, the awful oppression, the fiendish inhumanity. — Pshaw, you don't know how much of that is just newspaper stories. — Still, you will allow they've some cause for complaint, you'll allow that? Then if somebody knocked down a woman and began beating her to death on your front porch, wouldn't you run out and stop it? — Huh, and if somebody came into your office with a billy and ordered you to stop bossing your office boy, what would *you* do? Better quit making bonfires of niggers all over the country before we went around blowing off a lot of hot air about inhumanity, I guess, etc., etc. Maceo — Weyler — McKinley — concentration camps — filibusters — the "Commodore" expedition — do we not all of us remember it, I say?

Mr. Kendrick was among those who were against intervention — when he thought about Cuba's troubles at all, which was seldom. Of late he had been giving a stricter attention than ever, if that were possible, to the National Loan's affairs. He thought they were in danger of "going to sleep" at that institution, to use his own words, notwithstanding the fact that to outsiders, at least, it seemed to be prospering greatly.

The simple old building itself had recently been remodelled at a handsome cost, with all the new devices for heating and lighting and convenience within, and a grand, flourishing portico of columns without; you might see the plain citizens who were its patrons surveying with awe the new marble stairs, and the figures of "Commerce" and "Industry" in the triangular brow above the doors, and the bronze tablet set into the corner-stone with the mystifying legend A.D. MDCCCXCVI. Van Cleve did not wholly approve of the changes, being by nature severely opposed to any sort of show; but he could not deny that the bank took in a number of fresh accounts about that time which may have been due in large part to the increased majesty and solidity of its appearance. Still Van was critical; he had not been with the Loan and Savings all these years for nothing, and he had gone a long way since his early days in the office when he had felt an unquestioning respect for his elders and a readiness to learn of them. "This bank is Julius Gebhardt," he used to say to himself shrewdly; "he is the National Loan and Savings, body and bones, hide, horns, and tallow. Every one of the directors is a back number. They keep on electing themselves over and over again, and when they come trailing in here Monday mornings it looks like an overflow meeting from the Old Men's Home. I'll bet they do just what Gebhardt says, and half the time they don't know what he's saying. Of course he's used to it, but it's a pretty big responsibility for one man. He knows the banking business as well as the next man, I suppose, but nobody's infallible. The trouble with him is he's one of these fellows that don't know how to get work out of other people —" and more in the same strain, proving to Van's own satisfaction, at any rate, that there was one man who also knew the banking business, whose judgment, if not infallible, was very nearly so, who did know how to

get work out of other men, to wit: Van Cleve Kendrick. If he had owned a few more shares, say twenty instead of eight, Van was confident *he* would be on the board, and what was more, would probably be cashier in place of Schlactman, who was in ill-health, and talked of moving to Colorado. In fact, Mr. Gebhardt had hinted as much, in his big, warm-hearted, almost fatherly way. He liked Van Cleve and did not hesitate to show it. The cashier's salary was three thousand. "I'd have a use for it," Van thought, with a grim smile.

The family had lately been showing signs of their perennially recurrent restlessness, which Van recognized from ancient acquaintance. To be sure, a change of houses was about due, as they had lived in the present one upwards of a year. Once in a long while it crossed Van Cleve's mind that he might some day surprise them by putting his foot down on all this foolishness; but the time never came. He always had too much to do and too many things on his mind to burden himself further by futile attempts at argument with his household; he knew beforehand every word they would say, and lacked the patience to listen; it was easier and infinitely more peaceful to let them have their own way. As for discussing his plans and prospects with them, of confiding to them all that about the bank and the president and his methods, and Van's own opinions, the young man never dreamed of such a thing. They could not have understood a word of it; they were devoted to him heart and soul, but they could not speak his language, nor live in his world. The Office and the Street were his real home, and under his own roof he had companions, but no companionship.

He had forgot all about the morning's disturbance, by dinner-time when he reached home; and was only reminded of it by finding the house as yet unlighted in

a kind of symbolic gloom, and everybody tiptoeing about in an impressive anxiety. "Mother has been *very* ill, Van Cleve," Evelyn told him with a species of reproachful resignation; "it has been an unusually sharp seizure. Doctor McCrea couldn't understand this attack at all, and kept saying she must have had some *nervous shock*. But of course we didn't tell him about this morning," said Evelyn, magnanimously. "It doesn't make any difference about *me*, Van, but I hope you won't be so cruel again to poor Mother, who only wanted to help you and give you a pleasure."

"Well, that's so; I'm sorry about that," said Van, troubled; "I forgot how easy Aunt Myra gets sick. But you know, Evelyn, I can't have you doing things like that, if only for the looks of the thing. These doctors all keep a pretty good line on who can pay them and who can't; they've *got* to. Doctor McCrea knew I could afford that bill; it wasn't exorbitant —"

"Doctor McCrea was *very much disappointed!*" his cousin interrupted triumphantly. "I explained to him in a tactful way, so as not to put you in a bad light, and he said, 'Oh, don't I get any picture then?' and I could see he *didn't like it at all*, though he gave a kind of queer laugh. I couldn't say anything, of course."

Van Cleve grunted, but was otherwise silent, after the exasperating fashion he had of allowing Evelyn the last word, and the peculiar barrenness of victory. "And there's something else, Van — something you ought to know. The doctor says that Mother —" she was beginning importantly; but was checked by a look from her grandmother.

"Dinner's ready, and we'd better wait till afterward to tell Van Cleve about that," interposed the old lady, hastily, remembering other days and the late Joshua. It was always advisable to feed a man first. And accordingly after the meal, during which everybody

was painstakingly amiable and lively, she herself re-introduced the subject.

"The doctor thinks that your Aunt Myra ought to be in a different climate, Van Cleve. I have been thinking it myself for some time, and when I spoke of it this morning, he said at once that I was right, and that a change was good for everybody. He said if she could go away for a while, it would undoubtedly make her feel better —"

"Then I explained with *perfect frankness*, because that is always *best*," Evelyn interrupted, "that we couldn't take trips South and all that sort of thing, which I could see he was about to suggest. 'Oh, Doctor McCrea' I said, '*We* can't be running off on jaunts that way just for pleasure. We have to make a *permanent* move. And, besides, we've been here for seven years now, and I think Mother ought to get out of it for good. The Ohio Valley climate never has agreed with her, and now she is fairly *saturated* with it, and you can see she's losing ground every day.' He said, 'Oh, I think you exaggerate,' but of course you know he said that just to soothe me and keep me from being frightened —"

"You mean to say you want to get up and leave here — you want me to quit my job, and look for another somewhere else," said Van Cleve, unmoved as usual.

"But if it's a question of Mother's *health*, Van Cleve —"

"You can always get something to do — you're not appreciated in the bank, anyhow. You could get Mr. Gebhardt to transfer you to some other bank; they do things like that all the time, don't they? Mr. Gebhardt thinks so highly of you, he'd do *anything* for you, Van — you could go anywhere on his recommendation," cried Mrs. Van Cleve.

"Where d'ye want to go now?" said Van Cleve, coming to the point with his disconcerting directness.



Evelyn began eagerly: "Why, I thought at once of New York. I could look after Mother, and still go on with my professional career. It would be an ideal arrangement —"

"I never heard New York talked up much for a health resort," said Van Cleve.

"Well, a *health resort* isn't what she needs, you know. It's the complete change that would be so beneficial. Doctor McCrea was *enthusiastic*; he said it couldn't possibly do her any harm, and would probably be just as good for her as anywhere. And you know New York is so *interesting*, Van. I *loved* it when I was studying there. I have such clever, *stimulating*, exceptional friends. The change in the *social atmosphere* alone would brace Mother right up, I *know* —"

"New York is a wonderful city," said Major Van Cleve; "I remember General Grant making that very remark to me once when we were walking up Fifth Avenue; we were both of us just back from the War, but it was before he had been elected to the Presidency. He turned to me and said: 'Well, Mage —' that was his nickname for me — 'New York is a marvellous place, isn't it?' Rather odd that he should have died and been buried there afterwards, I always thought."

Van Cleve let them talk; he was not angry nor out of patience; he was only sourly amused. This was Van's day — a fair sample of all his days. People who happened to be pretty well acquainted with the family used to repeat around a saying of Bob Gilbert's that always brought a laugh from the men, whatever the women thought of it. I suppose it was really dreadfully coarse. "'S shame!" says Bob, who was about three parts drunk, with tearful vehemence; "'s shame zose Van Cleves. Kept Van's nose grindstone years — *always* will keep it — 's shame. Know what they all need? Spankin' — *hic* — ol' lady an' all of 'em — need spankin' —" reiterated Bob with dark and frowning emphasis. "*Goo*' spankin'!"

## CHAPTER IX

### IN WHICH WE GIVE A DOG A BAD NAME

I do not remember whether it is recorded that the Industrious Apprentice ever took the Idle Apprentice aside, and pointed out to him the folly of his ways, scolded him heartily, and pled with him to reform. A man must have a tolerably good conceit of himself who will undertake to direct another man how to live, even though this other may be as notoriously in need of direction as was Robert Gilbert. Van Cleve hesitated and shrank before the task. He told himself that he had too stiff a job doing his own duty to be qualified to preach theirs to other people. Was he his brother's keeper, anyhow? It was impatience and indignation that roused him to hunt Bob out and lecture him, at last. Van thought the world was too kind, too stupidly kind, to this culprit; it liked him too well; it was ruinously soft-hearted; it kept on giving him a chance when it should have brought him up with a round turn! And all this in the face of the strange fact that Robert himself asked no quarter; he never offered any excuses; he was the most amiably unashamed and unrepentant sinner on earth, and the most incurably sanguine. "Never mind, Van, old man, don't worry yourself so over me. I hate to see you so worried!" he said affectionately, when the sober Mr. Kendrick had painfully got through with his exhortations. "I'm going to come out all right, you see if I don't. I'll get out even, don't you worry."

"You're always saying that, Bob," said Van Cleve, glumly; "you know very well you can't keep up this gait and come out anywhere but behind. You're ruining your health, and spoiling your chances, and making your people unhappy. You've got plenty of sense, Bob, and I can't see why —"

"Well, I'm glad you'll allow me that much, anyhow!" said Bob with the utmost good temper. He met his friend's severe gaze with one full of amusement, insuperable nonchalance, honest affection. "You're not much of a preacher, Van; your heart's not in it. You don't really want to reform the bad little boy and make him a good little boy, and have him sign the pledge and all that, in the interest of virtue and respectability — not a bit of it, you time-serving old utilitarian, you! You only —"

"Oh, *good, bad* — that's not what I'm talking about!" interrupted Van Cleve, with a movement of irritation; "I don't want you to make an everlasting fool of yourself, that's all! All this drinking and having a good time with the boys, what does it amount to? Can't you see there's nothing in it? You can't keep on with *that* all your life. Why, why — damn it, Bob, there's *nothing in it!* Can't you see that?"

"There! Didn't I say that was the way you felt!" Bob stated, grinning. He made an extravagant display of surprise. "Why, Van Cleve, it looks to me as if you were trying to get me to settle down and *work* like yourself! And I used to think you had a sense of humor! Now Phil Cortwright says —"

"Oh, cut it out!" said Van, scowling.

"All right, just as you say," the other retorted tolerantly.

"I'm only talking because I — because I — I think a lot of you, you know, Bob," said Van Cleve, looking down, chewing hard at the end of his cigar, mortally abashed by this sentimental admission. The sight

moved Bob as no amount of arguing or hectoring could have done.

"Why, of course I know that, Van!" he cried out. The moisture sprang into his eyes; he wiped them unaffectedly. "Why, I know that, my dear old fellow! *You're* all right — everything you say is pretty near right, I guess," he said incoherently. He pulled himself together and went on with more steadiness, even earnestness — for him. "You see, Van Cleve, I've got a different way of looking at it from you. I believe in — in — well, I believe a man's life's his own to do what he wants with, so long as he doesn't harm anybody else. Well, then *I* don't harm anybody else, do I? Suppose I *do* — well — lush some off and on, and — and all that, you know — all the other things you say — why, it doesn't hurt anybody but me, does it? If I'm willing to take the consequences, why, it doesn't need to worry *you* any. I don't ask anybody to suffer for it but myself. Then where's the harm? I'm not responsible for any one else, and nobody else needs to feel responsible for me. That's the way I look at it."

"Do the family look at it that way, too?" Van Cleve asked.

"The family? Oh, well, they — of course they think more or less as you do, and the rest of the representative citizens," said Bob, smiling, but for the first time a little restive under his friend's eye. "Hang it, you goody-good people don't know how funny and inconsistent you are!" he burst out in a sort of good-natured impatience. "There're plenty of respectable old skin-flints walking around town this minute that gouge and grind and pile up the dollars and do more mischief in a day than I can in a year, and because they pass the plate in church, and go home to bed with the chickens, and never drink anything stronger than cold tea, you hold 'em up to me for models —"

"I wasn't holding up any models. You're dodging, Bob," said the other, gloomily.

But Bob had returned to his thesis. "Of course I don't mean to keep it up all my life, as you were saying. I can stop whenever I want to — when I get tired of it. In the meanwhile I'm not hurting anybody but myself, and I'm not hurting myself anything to speak of. And I'll pay that score myself," he repeated, rather grandiloquently.

"I don't know whether a man can do that or not," said Van Cleve; "pay for himself, I mean. Looks to me sometimes as if everybody got assessed for him all around."

Robert had left Messrs. Steinberger & Hirsch some while before this date, those gentleman having, in fact, intimated that his services were no longer required. Even their not unduly exalted standards were too high for the young man, it seemed. "We liked him, too," one of the partners was reported to have expressed himself; "we liked him first-rate — but he's no good. We gave him a thorough try out, but he'll never be any good!" and Mr. Hirsch chalked his cue, and tried a shot and missed, and perched himself once more on the tall-legged chair in the billiard room of the Business Men's, while the regular after-luncheon game proceeded. "I'm sorry for his folks," he observed; "Max and I stood for it a good deal longer than we would have for most, on their account — nice folks — nice old gentleman, the Professor — but that boy —" he gave a negative twitch of the head, and abandoned the subject.

The next news was that young Gilbert had got a berth on the *Record-World*, which was a penny sheet that used to come out in six or eight successive editions of an afternoon with detonating head-lines, every smallest event decorated with the most lurid purple patch conceivable. For a while the young man was

quite faithful to his duties, perhaps finding in the haste and tension of the work almost enough of the false excitement he seemed to crave. As invariably happened, everybody in this new world liked him; they liked him even after they, too, had begun to shake their heads over him — even when they, too, had to “speak to” him. In the end, like all the rest of the friends he was constantly making and constantly disappointing, they also acknowledged that Bob was indeed “no good.” He had some fine, warm-blooded virtues; he was loyal, generous, and humane; he was curiously clean-minded and simple with all his gross self-indulgence. But — they agreed sorrowfully — he was not over clever; he could not be depended on for half an hour; he did not know the meaning of duty and ambition; put him to the test, in short, and you would find Bob Gilbert pretty nearly worthless.

The family accepted the unhappy fact with a plain and prosaic dignity, as do almost all families; we may observe them often, perfectly unheroic individually, yet displaying collectively not a little heroism. No doubt they all got used to it in the course of time; and of course the Professor and his wife had realized the truth from the first, even when Lorrie was doing her best to shield them from it. Van Cleve told her so in his hard, matter-of-fact way. “It’s no use, Lorrie,” he said; “you can’t keep this thing about Bob dark. Your mother’s probably known all along. I shouldn’t wonder if she thought she was keeping it from you all the while you thought you were keeping it from her. I don’t know why women make believe that way. It doesn’t do any good. Might as well look at things square in the face.”

“You don’t understand — men *can’t* understand,” said Lorrie, sadly; “why, Mother and I can’t talk about it, even now, to each other. We keep on pretending. Why, you yourself have never talked about

it like this before, and yet you knew, you *must* have known about Bob for two or three years, even if you didn't know before that. Is that why you haven't — you haven't been with him so much?"

"Well, Bob's never around where I am, you know," said Van Cleve, a little lamely; it was not easy to explain his position to Bob's sister. "I'm busy — I haven't any time to hunt him up. I'm sorry, but —"

"But you'll have to let Bob go?" Lorrie finished for him, unable to keep the bitterness out of her voice. "I'm sorry, too, Van. You're one of the people that can do the most with him — that he pays the most attention to. If his own friends give him up — but I daresay you are right. You can't sacrifice your own interests — you have yourself to think about and your own future, and you can't be burdened with Bob."

"Yes, I've got to think about myself — I'm always thinking about myself," Van Cleve agreed with her dryly. Her words stung him to the quick; he was conscious of a certain truth underlying their unkindness and unfairness. He *was* constantly thinking about Van Cleve Kendrick's affairs and prospects — he *was* thinking about himself, but surely, surely not wholly *for* himself! That very morning Evelyn and his aunt had begun again with their New York plan. They had written to a dozen friends and fellow-students, wonderfully able, astute persons, and got all manner of reports, figures, and estimates pointing unanimously to the fact that it was incalculably cheaper and healthier to live in New York than anywhere else on the face of this globe! Two hundred would move them beautifully — "You know we're very good managers, Van, dearest." "Two hundred, hey? You must think I get my money from the pump!" he had said in vain jocularly. Now a sudden melancholy invaded the

young man ; what was he but a money-making machine ? he thought dispiritedly. Even Lorrie believed that that was all he cared for — even Lorrie !

As for Lorrie herself, did she know how she hurt him ? She was a tender-hearted, good woman, and shrank from inflicting pain on anybody ; but even a tender-hearted, good woman may sometimes take advantage of her position to visit some of her own unhappiness on another's head. And Lorrie would have been more than a mortal girl not to have suspected her power over the young fellow. At any rate, swift contrition and a desire to make amends took hold of her. "That sounded horrid, but I didn't mean it *that* way, you know," she said hastily and penitently ; "it's only that I *do* wish — you have such an influence over Bob — if he was only out of that — that atmosphere he's got into — if he was with people like you —"

"Oh, *influence!*" Van broke in harshly ; "I tell you, Lorrie, this talk about 'unfortunate surroundings' and 'bad influence' and 'good influence' makes me very tired. Any fellow that's too weak-kneed to resist 'evil influence' is too weak-kneed to be bolstered up much by good ones. Not you nor I nor the Almighty can make a man go crooked any more than we can make him go straight ; he's got to do it himself. 'I got into bad company —' 'I wasn't directed right —' 'Nobody looked after me —' pooh ! That's the old eternal incessant yawp of folly and feebleness and guilt — you don't want to begin excusing Bob that way. Of course I know you will forgive him and keep on forgiving him, no matter what he does —"

"And what kind of a sister would I be, if I didn't ?" cried Lorrie with a great deal of spirit. "I don't at all believe what you say, Van. People are different. We can't all be pillars of strength. Mr. Cortwright says —" she stopped short. "*Well?*" she said sharply ; for Mr. Kendrick's countenance had assumed an ex-



tremely forbidding and unpleasant expression at the sound of that name.

"Bob started quoting Cortwright at me, too," he said acridly. "That's where he's got his precious theories about irresponsibility, and all the rest of it. I recognized the brand."

"Oh! Then you don't think Mr. Cortwright is the proper sort of friend for Bob to have, is that it?" said Lorrie, in an ominous calm.

"Well, I don't, Lorrie, since you ask me. I think that association has been the worst thing in the world for a fellow of Bob's disposition," said Van Cleve; and he was honest and disinterested in saying it. "I believe Cortwright's influence —"

"I thought you said just now that influence had nothing to do with it," said Lorrie. And Van Cleve had no answer, alas! His own words confounded him. He was sure he was right; right in his theory, right about the facts, but no juggling would fit the two together!

The interview ended rather stiffly on both sides; Lorrie went upstairs after the young man had left, with a fire-red spot on each cheek. "The idea of his hinting *that* about Philip!" she thought with an anger no criticism of herself could have aroused; "Phil never says a word about *him*. And he's tried and *tried*, and done his best for Bob. What did Van Cleve Kendrick ever do, I'd like to know? He's ashamed of the way he's abandoned Bob, that's all — he's ashamed and — and jealous, that's what made him talk that way!"

And that was all Mr. Kendrick got for his interference. It would have darkened his skies enough to know that he had offended Lorrie or hurt her; but not long after a piece of news descended upon him like another blight — news which, by the way, was already common property, and seemed to have travelled around to everybody before reaching him, who was secretly

the most concerned. Even Major Van Cleve knew it; even Mr. Gebhardt referred to it negligently, having probably been informed by Natalie or the other Gebhardt girls; and it had a paragraph all to itself in next Sunday morning's *Society Jottings*—"The engagement is announced of Miss Laura Gilbert, daughter of Professor and Mrs. Gilbert, who has been a great favorite ever since she made her bow to society two or three seasons ago, to Mr. Philip Cortwright. Mr. Cortwright is a Eureka College man, a member of the old Cortwright family of Kentucky—" etc., etc. "*Two or three seasons ago!*" ejaculated Miss Lucas in high contempt and indignation upon reading the above lines; "Lorrie Gilbert's been out for ten years. She was going everywhere when we first came here to live. But of course the society reporters have to say something agreeable, or nobody would tell them anything."

Van Cleve heard the announcement silently, with as indifferent a face as he could manage. "I chose a good time to tell her I didn't approve of Cortwright — tactful and opportune in me, wasn't it?" he remarked inwardly, with savage irony. The next time he saw her there were others about, and a good deal of joking allusion going on, and it would undoubtedly have been the proper moment for Mr. Kendrick to have tendered his compliments upon the happy event; but, in point of fact, he did nothing of the kind; he kept silence — and it may be Miss Gilbert liked him just as well for saying nothing and looking morose; she was only human after all.

In truth, Lorrie was human enough to be very happy these days, in spite of the skeleton in the family closet. It would be hard for a girl yet in her twenties, engaged to be married to a very handsome, devoted, popular (or, at least, well-known) young fellow, with whom she is quite openly and genuinely in love — it would be a hard matter, I say, for any girl to be seriously un-

happy in these circumstances. Of course, they were not to be married for a while yet — Philip's business, etc. But Lorrie was profoundly busy, hemstitching, embroidering monograms, looking out for bargains in household linens, and so on; you came upon her at the counters, turning over piles of dainty goods, rosy, thoughtfully excited, measuring off on her neat fingers, sagacious, sweet, wholesome, about this as about everything. It was understood that perhaps next year — her mother's wedding-day had been the tenth of June; if Lorrie should be married next year, the tenth of June, eighteen-ninety-nine, it would be thirty years to the day, after her mother — remarkable fact! That would be the last year of the century, too — another remarkable fact!

"No, it won't be the last year. Nineteen hundred's the last year," said Cortwright, laughing. He recited the hundred-pennies-in-a-dollar argument which people were making use of to convince one another on this often disputed point. "Why, you wise, practical little person, who would have thought you would have had to have that explained to you?" he said fondly. It pleased him singularly to catch her tripping; he liked to feel even so trivial a superiority, for there were many moments, when, as secure as he was in his own conceit, he was a little afraid, a little abashed in the presence of this girl whom he was to marry; sometimes he wished uncomfortably that Lorrie were not quite so *good*! "Why won't you let me kiss you?" he once said to her aggrievedly, in the first hours of their betrothal. "You belong to me now. I wouldn't be a man if I didn't want to. Most girls like it — I mean I always supposed they did — I always understood so. How can you be so — so cold?" He put an arm around her, at once masterful and beseeching. "Please, Lorrie! You know you really like — want me to —" he murmured with lips very close.

"You can kiss me, but not — not my neck that way," said Lorrie, backing off, turning scarlet, troubled rather than angry. "I — I don't like to have you kiss my neck —" for indeed it was some such intimate caress which he had already attempted that had led to this scene. The young woman shrank from it indefinitely; she shrank from the act and the look in her lover's eyes. Cortwright obeyed, resenting what he called inwardly her prudery, even while clearly conscious that it was precisely that quality about her which most strongly attracted him. *She* wasn't cheap, he thought, with an exultant thrill; and naturally coveted her the more.

This news of Lorrie Gilbert's engagement created only a mild stir socially, having been expected any time these two or three years. It was supposed to be a very suitable match; Lorrie might have done better, doubtless — she had never lacked attention from men, some of whom had been better off in the worldly way, and perhaps more "settled" than Mr. Cortwright. But the latter, ever since he came here, had always been well enough received and well enough liked and was doing well enough, as all agreed, in his business; and it looked as if he was very much in love with Lorrie, and certainly she was over head and ears in love with him. People in general were glad to hear anything pleasant connected with the poor Gilberts, who had had so much that was sad and discreditable to endure from that ne'er-do-well, Robert. It had gotten to the pass that their friends seldom even mentioned Robert nowadays. The girls whom he used to know, who came to see Lorrie and gave her engagement luncheons and engagement presents of little silver candlesticks, and ornamental spoons and after-dinner coffee-cups, who were already planning linen showers, and chattering to her about the lovely four-room suites in the new apartment buildings, those girls never asked after Bob. They

never invited him to their homes any more; they contrived not to see him on the street. How could they? He had got to looking so seedy and run-down and *dissipated*, they said. Nobody would want to be seen with him—nobody could afford to be seen with him! The last appearance he made in society had been when he went to call on one of the girls so “tanked,” as she afterwards described his condition in indignant slang, that he didn’t know what he was doing, and her Uncle George, who providentially happened to be staying there for the Christmas holidays, had to get him away out of the house, and take him back to the Gilberts’; and when Papa (who had been in Chicago) got home and heard about it, he said never to let that young man speak to her again! It was a universal taboo, excepting on the part of Miss Paula Jameson, whom Bob continued to visit in his ostracism more often than ever before. At the moment, however, he was deprived even of that resource, for Paula went to Palm Beach with her mother in March; conceivably, Robert was the only person that missed her. The young lady had never counted at all, socially; she had no friends, and heard from and wrote to nobody, not even Lorrie. “She’s got such awfully *hotel* manners!” was a criticism I once overheard from some other young lady; “and the way she simply fastened herself on to Lorrie Gilbert! I suppose she found she couldn’t *get in* after all, because she doesn’t stick to Lorrie so much now, but it used to be, really — !” She ended these somewhat cryptic sentences in a tone conveying all the scathing disapproval of sweet-and-twenty.

## CHAPTER X

### REMEMBER THE *MAINE*!

THAT winter — *about ten years ago*, wasn't it? — all the world of our town, as of a hundred other towns all over the country, went about its business and pleasure as usual without the slightest suspicion that a tremendous national event was going to take place, though this will doubtless seem to our descendants to have been abundantly foreshadowed. Couldn't we see it coming? Is it possible that we never saw it coming? We did not, oh, younger generation. The world, Lorrie's world, the Van Cleves' world, your and my world, was bringing its daughters "out" at dances and dinners and teas, and going to its clubs and Symphony concerts, and to the Yale-Harvard Game, and the Horse-show, and the Junior Prom., — when it could afford these latter diversions, — and complaining about its servants and the high cost of living, even as it does to-day. Every morning the world got up and read in its newspaper about Zola and Dreyfus with a kind of indignant amusement; it read about the last murder, the last divorce, the last serum discovery and Edison invention; and perhaps wondered indifferently if these mechanical piano players and motor vehicles they were experimenting with would ever be of any practical value! It also read that the Spanish minister — whose name it considered unpronounceable and therefore outlandish — had resigned, following some unpleasantness at Washington; "Dupuy de Lome, gone home, no more to roam!" the comic editor facetiously chanted;

and that a bomb had exploded in the Hotel Inglaterra in the city of Havana, and another bomb in the mayor's office; and that one of our big battleships had been sent down there to protect American interests.

Then came the morning of the 16th of February with some appalling news. Bob Gilbert's paper, being an afternoon one, did not get that "scoop"; but it made a gallant effort and came out at noon with mighty head-lines and exclamation points, with columns of information or misinformation, with pictures of the unfortunate vessel, her captain and officers, and complete details about the *Maine's* size, "displacement," "armament," cost, and previous career. Bob himself fell into the wildest state of excitement; it kept him sober for a week! He wanted to organize a body of militia, wanted to telegraph all sorts of incendiary messages to our Ohio congressmen and senators, to our Ohio President himself, wanted to rush down to Cuba and lend his whole strength to avenging our unlucky brave lads. To be sure, he was not the only one who lost his head and fumed and fretted and girded at the Administration, and denounced the investigations as cowardly and farcical delays. "Ten thousand Ohio troops could be landed in Cuba in three days!" the papers proclaimed; we lived to know better, and, dismal to relate, not one single Ohio troop or trooper ever struck a blow on the island, or for it, but at least the will was not lacking. Within a week of the disaster there were militia-companies drilling furiously all over the State, and all over every other State in the Union; there were fiery speeches on the floor of every Legislature; at a *matinée* performance in Daly's Theatre in the city of New York, the entire audience, acting on some inexplicable spontaneous impulse, arose and sang the Star-Spangled Banner, the orchestra joining in with equal fervor; and at a big public banquet, while the temper of the Administration still

seemed to be for peace, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy got up and made a speech of such strength and significance that everybody present nudged his neighbor, and one gentleman went so far as to say to the presiding genius of the gathering, "Mr. Hanna, may we please fight Spain now?" So, at any rate, the newspapers reported.

"Who is he? That Navy man, I mean?" old Mrs. Van Cleve asked, when this item was read out to her; her eyes had been failing lately; and Evelyn gave the name.

"Humph! I'm not much wiser now than I was before!" the old lady remarked. I am afraid we did not know as much as we should have about the public servants, either their names or stations.

Mr. Van Cleve Kendrick, so far as was known, made but one comment on the situation. "I guess we can't get out of it without a fight; and if we *do* have war, wheat ought to jump some," he said; and studied the market reports and gave closer attention to business than ever, these days. The news that troops of the regular army had actually been ordered to Key West, that some millions of dollars had been voted for "defence," that the *Oregon* had started for Cape Horn and Atlantic waters, that the *Vizcaya* had anchored off Manhattan Island (to the terror of the unprotected Manhattanese!), the talk about the Philippines, with consequent searchings of the map, and the Pacific Squadron, the withdrawal of the United States consul from Havana, and of Mr. Woodford from the Embassy at Madrid — all this news and all the heroic excitement of the times affected Van Cleve not in the least. The young man was not unpatriotic; he had as much pride and spirit as any of his fellows, and, it cannot be doubted, heard the songs and speeches and saw the massed soldiery under the banner of his country with an honorable stirring of the heart. But whatever befell,



— and, like the rest of us, he had a hearty belief in the power of our arms and an unshakable expectation of success, — Van must still stay at home and make a living for himself and those dependent on him. Not his would ever be adventure and glory, nor for him the “bright face of danger”; and though he would probably have done his duty manfully on the pitched field, he recognized (perhaps with regret) that the homespun career was the one for which he was best fitted. He was in odd contrast to that time-honored warrior, Major Stanton, who, if his age and state of health had not prohibited it, as he was careful to assure everybody, would have been the first to offer himself to the Cause. “It’s hard for us — hard! We old fellows that went out for the Union in sixty-one — hard to be shelved now!” he would say with a magnificent break in his voice, and wagging the grizzled whiskers sadly. It was an impressive spectacle, and Major Van Cleve was very popular on all political-military occasions, where, indeed, he cut an admirable figure and exercised handsomely his fine gift of eloquence. Once or twice he appeared in his pathetic, old, faded, blue uniform of the Nine Hundredth Ohio, with prodigious effect. Van Cleve did not attend these assemblies; and was rather gruff and short with the people who spoke enthusiastically to him about his uncle’s imposing presence and oratory.

Van Cleve’s family, by the way, were going to New York to live! The news created an interest in their set of acquaintances hardly second to that roused by the international complications. They had a dozen reasons for going, any one of them unanswerable — Mrs. Lucas’s health, the possibility of *much greater economy* in living, — in such a city as New York, one can live any way one chooses, as is well known, — a wider sphere for Evelyn, a more appreciative public, and a thoroughly artistic atmosphere — they recited

all these arguments with their customary fervor and certainty. Evelyn had gone East ahead of the others and found an apartment, three rooms with one *large* room that would just do for a studio and sitting-room with a folding bed, you know; it was on a street just off of Washington Square, in one of those old-fashioned New York houses remodelled and turned into flats — so *picturesque*! They would only need a few things, and expected to get beautiful pieces of furniture, old mahogany and so on, second hand, *for a song*; it was merely a matter of knowing *where to go*, and Evelyn and her artist friends of course had made a study of that. Nobody could justifiably accuse these ladies of extravagance or imprudence; they counted their pennies with the utmost care, and were adepts in all the feminine arts of saving and management. It developed that Van Cleve was not intending to move with them; they explained that he couldn't give up his position here, of course; but equally, of course, they wouldn't be so selfish as to walk off and leave him without knowing that he was perfectly comfortable; and accordingly a wonderful, ideal, Elysian boarding-house had been discovered where they kept *such* a table, and he would have *such* a room, so large, light, and sunny!

Van had made no comment on these arrangements; the women, indeed, wondered and were aggrieved at his unsympathetic silence; it was true that he gave them ungrudgingly whatever money they asked for, — and in fairness it must be said they asked for as little as possible, — but he paid no heed to their explanations, he took no interest in the plans they made either for themselves or for his own comfort. He would not even go to look at the matchless boarding-house. "Why, I suppose it's all right, if you say so — it'll be just as good as home," he said, cheerfully indifferent.

"*Van Cleve*, how can you say such a thing? As if any

place could be the same as your own *home!*" they exclaimed in reproachful chorus; nor could they at all understand why he laughed. They said to each other that Van Cleve was getting more and more wrapped up in his affairs — it would end by making him hard and selfish — he might even become miserly!

It is strange to think that such small doings as these can go on side by side with the great stirring business of the nation on the edge of war, and receive within their own circle quite as much attention. People did not cease to be interested in spring wardrobes and summer trips, in weddings and new houses and house-cleaning and the Musical Festival; everybody, I repeat, thought and talked as much as ever about these things that month of April, as if nothing of moment had been going forward. And on there at Washington, the debate about arbitration and intervention rumbled on, and the Senate recognized Cuba, and the President called out the troops, and the Ultimatum was issued and forestalled; and that energetic Assistant Secretary of the Navy resigned and set about forming his regiment of Rough Riders. The last did really touch us closer, for here and there we heard of some prospective recruit or aspirant for that body, somebody's cousin or brother, some young fellow at Harvard or ranching it out West; one of the rumors credited that young Cortwright, — Phil Cortwright that was with Steinberger & Hirsch, — Lorrie Gilbert's Mr. Cortwright, with ambitions in that direction. Nobody was surprised to hear it; he was a dashing sort of fellow and would make a first-rate cavalryman — any man that came out of Kentucky could ride and shoot, for that matter. Cortwright could probably get a commission with ease; at any rate, he was going to Washington to make a try for it, everybody presently understood. Washington was brimming over with gentlemen of like aims from every part of the country, and there was a great pull-

ing of wires ; but Cortwright knew the congressman from this district personally ; he was related to the senior senator from Kentucky ; and, moreover, some of us had a private idea that the Ohio candidates might not impossibly be the favored ones.

Lorrie, looking a little pale, but sweetly resolute and cheerful, confirmed the report. "Yes. He's going. He thinks he ought to ; he wants to do his duty —" she said with a beautiful pride in her hero ; she had no conception of the tinsel and spot-light allurements this martial drama held out for him, as for nine-tenths of the other young fellows ; and, for the matter of that, when this brave, eager, self-centred restlessness overtakes a man, is there a woman on earth who can hold him ? Something of the glamour bedazzles the feminine eye, too ; she is to be the star, the solace, and inspiration just as she was five hundred years ago when the knight went forth with her favor on his helmet ; and perhaps "I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more," is the most potent argument ever addressed to her.

"I'd go myself — with the Red Cross, you know — if Mother thought she could get along without me. But she wants me here, and there will be plenty of women that *can* go," said Lorrie, who never had to explain to anybody that she wanted to do *her* duty. "Bob's going, too — not with the army — his paper's sending him. He's quite wild about it," she told people. They were liable to remark to one another afterwards that Bob would be no great loss whatever became of him, but the way those things generally turned out, a fellow like Bob came through it all scot-free without a scratch or a day's sickness, while any number of fine, useful men succumbed right away to the hardships or the enemies' bullets !

Robert, however, showed a disposition to straighten up, under all the excitement, queerly enough ; he took

himself with gratifying seriousness in the capacity of war-correspondent to the *Record-World*, and was too absorbed in preparations for the campaigning to spare any time to his former disreputable company and diversions. In the beginning, with some idea of enlisting, he had gone and got himself examined at the recruiting station for the regular army. "Those are the fellows that are sure to go, you know," he said cannily; and he came away a little chop-fallen at being rejected by the doctor and sergeant. "Said my teeth were defective! Did you ever hear of anything so fine-drawn as that?" he told Van Cleve in a comical indignation. "I said to the sergeant, 'Why, my teeth are as good as yours. I'll bet I can beat you chewing any day!' He had the worst old yellow grinders you ever saw. He just laughed."

"Teeth, hey?" said Van Cleve, looking the other over with his shrewd, hard gray eyes; "they must make a pretty searching examination."

"Oh, yes, you have to strip, of course. They measure you and test your lungs, and you have to come up to some standard they've got. The doctor said I was a little too light — too thin for my height, you know, but I don't think that would have made any trouble. I told him I'd make it my business to get heavier, and he kind of laughed. He asked me how long I'd had this cough, too — it's nothing but a cold I've had off and on this winter — and I noticed him thumping around my chest; that shows you how particular they are. That's all right, too; I'm not kicking about that. They've got to have sound men physically in the army. But *teeth* — piffle!" Robert ejaculated disgustedly. "Well, as long as I'm going anyhow, for the paper, I've got the laugh on 'em. But to be with the army itself would be more fun."

Van Cleve listened to him with an extraordinary

inward movement of affection and pity; there were times when he felt old enough to be Bob's father. "Well, you want to fatten up and — and get rid of your cold so as to be in first-class shape, because it's bound to be a good deal like hard work part of the time, anyhow," he advised Robert. But when they had parted, he shook his head over the teeth episode. "I shouldn't wonder if they said that to every poor devil they reject, rather than tell him right out what the matter is with him," he opined sagely; and wondered if the humanity of doctors was not sometimes ill-judged. It did not need a doctor's experience to see at a glance what sort of a fellow Bob was; the pace he went was beginning to tell on him; and even if he behaved himself, he was not of the type wanted in the United States army.

Bob's mother and sister, who had awaited the verdict in terror, were too much relieved to sympathize with him; his position was likely to be exciting and hazardous enough, anyhow, they thought. Mrs. Gilbert was never seen to shed a tear, or heard to utter a word in opposition; she used to follow him to the door whenever he left the house, and watch him every step of the road, if he went no farther than the corner or across the street. When he was at home, she would be forever visiting his room on slight errands, even slipping in like a small, gentle, noiseless ghost at any hour of the night, to look at him while he slept, as she had when he was a little boy in his crib years ago. All the things he liked to eat were constantly on the table; and the mother even went so far as to rout out a photograph of Paula Jameson in a striking pose like a variety actress, a photograph that Mrs. Gilbert cordially detested, and restore it to the place on Bob's bureau, whence she had removed it in a temper six months before! "I want him to remember everything pleasantly," she said to Lorrie. Robert himself

was quite unconscious or unobservant of these efforts, though he was kind after his fashion.

"Don't you worry, Moms, correspondents never get hurt. They don't have to stand up to be fired at, you know — they can run like rabbits, when they get scared, and nobody blames 'em," he said, in a laughing but sincere attempt to reassure her. "There's no Romansoldier, nor boy-stood-on-the-burning-deck about *me*. I'll bet the first volley I hear I'll establish a new world's record for the running high jump. I'll land somewhere in the next county, and I won't get back till New Year's!"

"No, you won't run, Bob; you'd never run away in the wide world!" cried his mother, flushing all over her pretty, faded face; and though she joined in the laugh against herself, the flush remained. The Virginia woman remembered the Shenandoah and the guns of Chancellorsville. It was with faces of resolute calm that she and his sister kissed the young man good-by the morning he started for Tampa and "the front"; his father wrung his hand; the little boys of the neighborhood hung around, and scrabbled for the honor of carrying his suit case; Mrs. Gilbert watched him down the street for the last time; and he swung on to the rear platform of the trolley car, and his figure lessened in the distance waving his new Panama hat. Down at the Louisville and Nashville station, here was Van Cleve Kendrick, that stoic and cynic and temperance lecturer, with a box of cigars and some kind of wonderful confection in leather and nickel plate combining a a knife, fork, spoon, cup, flask, and goodness knows what else, for camp use! He thrust the gifts confusedly upon Bob while they bade each other good-by. — "Well, so long, Van!" — "Here's luck, Bob!" — it was a simple ceremony. The train-shed was crowded with a great rush of arriving and departing travellers, not a few military-looking gentlemen with military-looking lug-

gage among them, for these were war times. On Bob's own train, there were a score of newspaper men bent on similar business — jolly fellows all; his kind, gay, boyish face shone on Van Cleve from the midst of them; the train pulled out; and Van walked off to the office, perhaps envying them a little.

In the meanwhile Lorrie's Mr. Cortwright got his appointment, according to his confident expectation, and came back to her in high spirits. He had seen and had interviews with the President and the Secretary of War; he was to "report for duty" at such and such a place, such and such a date; he was planning his baggage; he had his photograph taken in uniform for Lorrie; the girls used to see it standing on her dressing table, looking more than ever reckless and handsome, and said to one another that it was a pity he hadn't always been in the army, it seemed to suit him so well somehow, he appeared to so much advantage as a military man. Some of her friends may have even envied Lorrie her romantic position; and in truth I am not sure that in spite of her miserable moments of apprehension for him, these last few weeks may not have been the happiest Lorrie had ever spent with her lover. He had never been so devoted, so thoughtful and tender; and when the dreaded time of parting came, spoke to her in a fashion that became him well, gravely and manfully. "You're a deal too good for me, my dear; it makes me ashamed to see you care so much," he said, with real humility; the depth of her feeling, for the first time revealed, surprised and touched and a little awed Philip. "I — I almost wish you didn't care so much," he stammered nervously; and he did not offer to kiss her neck now, but instead took her hand and laid it against his lips with something like reverence. "I wish — I *wish* —!" He was silent, looking down in a swift, passing, useless pain and shame and regret. After all, he told himself, he wasn't much



worse than the next man — men couldn't *help* some things — and anyhow that life was all over and done with forever for him now — no use bewailing the spilled milk — the thing was to live straight from this on, and be worthy of this splendid girl. Lorrie and he would be married — they would have children — ! He kissed her and held her close in honest pride and tenderness.

"I'm not going to be silly any more — I didn't mean to be silly at all — only I c-couldn't quite help it," said Lorrie, bravely, swallowing the rest of her sobs, and raising her head from his shoulder. "And you may not be in any battles, anyway !" she added, so naïvely hopeful that Cortwright laughed aloud.

"That's right, little woman. I'm going to come back all right," he said gayly ; "but when it's over, I believe I'll stay in the army ; I could get into the regulars, I think. A lot of the volunteer officers did after the Civil War, didn't they ? I'll stay in the army and end up a Major-general. That'll be better than pegging along with old Leo Hirsch, hey ? Give me one more kiss, Mrs. Major-general !"

He went off buoyantly, with his head up and a free step, in his familiar, carelessly graceful style ; and Lorrie, standing on the steps, looked after him, strained her eyes after him as every woman has looked and strained her eyes some time in her life after some man since this world began its journey through the stars. It happened to be a Sunday morning, the first of May, very leafy, green, fresh, and warm ; people were coming home from church, and children skipping on the pavements. Lorrie thought she would remember it to her last hour.

## CHAPTER XI

### MRS. AND MISS JAMESON AT HOME

THAT date of the first of May, eighteen-ninety-eight, was to be a much more memorable one even than poor Lorrie, restlessly following her sweetheart on his journey, through all the wan watches of the night, dreamed. For, by dawn of the next day, when he and many another girl's sweetheart, and hundreds of husbands and brothers besides, were long miles to the south, or already there down on the Gulf, there went blazing through the country the tidings of the battle in Manila harbor. The newspapers screamed jubilantly, and for once acceptably; a generation may not witness more than one such event. Old Glory flapped triumphantly from a thousand flagstaffs, fireworks roared and bonfires flamed. Remember the *Maine*! No danger, they'd remember it *now* fast enough! "I can't help feeling sorry for poor old Spain!" Bob Gilbert wrote from Tampa, to the touched amusement of the family; that was like Bob, they thought fondly, like his good-nature, his pliant humanity.

The young man was for a while very diligent about writing; Lorrie has a bundle of his war letters locked away in a drawer this minute. They have got to looking worn and dust-soiled in these ten years, and the ink which Bob managed to scatter about in such profusion with his great, sprawling, loose-jointed hand that always had such a schoolboy air, is faded to a kind of rust color; and I suppose they are not written in a

very high literary style, being merely the headlong scribbling full of fun and nonsense and spirit you might expect from Bob. He was plainly so well suited with his present life, its cinematograph changes, its rough-and-ready shifts, even its physical hardships, that one could not but feel a certain hopefulness for him. Bob was keeping straight; maybe he had found himself at last, and this was all he needed to make a man of him. It had been a toilsome trip, he wrote; everything disarranged or "congested" by the army trains, nothing running anywhere on schedule time, all kinds of delays, eat whenever you got a chance, and sleep if you dared! Tampa, of course, was chockful; he was bunking with some other newspaper men in the office of the *Daily Mail*, corner of Twiggs Street (address him there). They slept on the floor. Tell Moms not to worry; he had a blanket, and there was a place where they could wash up, and it was too roasting hot for anybody to catch cold; his cough was almost gone. As for Florida — give him little old Ohio! The tropic scenery didn't come up to specifications. For one thing, the palms were a fizzle. Instead of being a nice, tall, smooth, tapering trunk like a porch column, they were all swelled out in the middle like an Adam's apple on a giraffe — "I wouldn't give one of our buckeyes for the whole outfit of palms in Florida!" . . . "Everything down here is Plant's or Flagler's; they own the State between them. You ought to see the Tampa Bay Hotel, the one Plant spent so many millions on. It looks like Aladdin's Palace done in cake or butter or something, like the models of the World's Fair buildings the chef at the Queen City Club made one New Year's, don't you remember, Lorrie? All the high chief muck-a-mucks are staying there, and have their offices and headquarters; I saw Lawton and Roosevelt together. . . ." "The other night two or three hundred army mules that they've got in a kind of mule

barracks down at the foot of Franklin Street, got loose somehow and went stampeding in close formation through the town, like Bedlam letting go. Everybody turned out and thought the Spanish were coming!"

During succeeding days, the correspondence fell off; but that was only natural, considering the progress of the events which Robert had been detailed to watch. Even Lorrie's other letters, which had at first been of a daily regularity, gradually ceased to come, although Lieutenant Cortwright must have had time to spare, for he had complained bitterly of the state of inaction in which the Army was being kept, while the Navy was "right on the job," and "something happening every day"; and he railed at the Administration, and prophesied disastrous failure for a campaign conducted with so notable a lack of spirit and "push." Lorrie thought with a kind of adoring and delighted terror how brave and reckless and altogether demigod-like her hero was. It was her brother's opinion, too, that the Navy was getting all the best of it. "They landed some marines at a place on the coast somewhere, called Cienfuegos, and had a fight — don't know how much of a one. It's the talk here that the troops are to be embarked to-morrow — everybody perfectly crazy to go, of course, but only the regulars and the 70th New York, and *perhaps* some of ours to be taken. The censorship is something fierce; not half that goes on gets in the papers; he just blue-pencils it, you know, even private telegrams; I believe they look at all of the messages going either way, they want to spot the cipher ones presumably. . . . The *Porter* brought in another prize ship this morning, I heard. That must make about the twentieth; I've lost count. Wish I was a midshipmite or a bo'sun tight, or a somebody with a cheerily my lads, yo ho! This prize business is as easy as rolling off a log. Saw Cort again yesterday. Nothing

doing in his regiment," Bob wrote in one of the last letters they had from him.

Spring flowered abundantly; the noisy, joyous-fearful days went by with new wild reports for almost every hour of them. The State troops began to be more and more restless and aggrieved at Chattanooga and the other points of concentration. Nothing material seemed to be happening in Cuba. The *Oregon* arrived happily and joined the blockading squadron; more prizes were pounced upon and victoriously herded in. On the other hand, the Spanish men-of-war and the torpedo flotilla about which such dire misgivings had been aroused in the beginning, vanished from the face of the waters! They were at Cape Verde, they were at Porto Rico, they were at home, whence they had never departed, they were hiding in some corner, they were scouring the high seas, they were nowhere at all! And "*Quo Vadis* hades Cadiz navies?" blithely inquired the comic journalist, who was as much to the fore as ever. To the ordinary laymen and non-combatant, the host of American gentlemen of letters, short-story writers, long-story writers, magazine contributors, and newspaper correspondents appeared to be the strongest and most active force at this moment menacing Cuba.

Notwithstanding their presence and efforts, it was June before the location of the unlucky "Cadiz navies" was ascertained to be the harbor of Santiago. Towards the end of the month Lorrie got a letter from her brother — the first in two or three weeks — written from Key West, in the wildest spirits. Bob had been cruising on one of the press boats, the *Milton D. Bowers*, right off the coast of Cuba — right among the Fleet! So-and-So of Such-a-paper and So-and-So of Such-another were on the boat; he named the journalistic giants with pride. He was to go again in a few days; it depended on what happened. He had

been too busy to write — sorry! — but tell Moms he had not yet been in the slightest danger, and wasn't likely to be unless he deliberately went after it, and you might trust little Percival not to do *that*. And he couldn't tell them where to address their letters, he had no idea where he might be within a few hours; better send to the Tampa address, as heretofore.

Lorrie read the letter to her mother, both of them smiling and interested and uneasy as they sat in the side porch in the summer morning under the honeysuckle vine which was all fragrant and thick with bloom; and old Dingo, spread out peaceably in the patch of sunlight at their feet, stirred and cocked up his good brown head and ears as she finished. "I believe he knows we were reading something from Bob," said Lorrie. She spoke to the dog. "Yes, you're right, it's Bob's letter. Look, Dingo, Bob's letter!"

"I'm more afraid of those dreadful camp diseases and the water they have to drink than of anything else," said the mother, with her anxious, sweet face. "He doesn't say anything about how he's living now. Do you suppose he has had to sleep on the decks or out of doors somewhere, with his clothes on? Bob isn't very strong, and he — he doesn't always take care of himself."

It was the only way in which the two Gilbert women ever hinted to each other of Bob's chief failing. Lorrie looked worried; she had more than once wondered how it was with Bob down there in the camp where men must be living every way and any way; in spite of her common-sense, and his excuses, the increasing gaps between his letters obscurely alarmed her. Philip's letters were scanty, too, but then there were *reasons* why Philip could not write; his duties —

Dingo growled again amicably, and rose, wagging; and a shadow came across the plot of sunshine. Mrs. Gilbert gave a jump and exclamation; she was nervous

these days, and the unexpected appearance of a visitor startled her unduly. "Why, *Paula!*" she ejaculated the next moment; "where did you drop from? Why, we didn't even know you were in town! Why, *Paula!* You came stealing up like a little ghost. When did you get back? Did you have a nice time?"

"It was in the paper Sunday, Mother; didn't you see it?" cried Lorrie; and sprang up and would have kissed the other, but that Paula, who after her sudden arrival had stood for a second quite motionless staring abstractedly at both of them, now stooped or turned aside and dropped down into the nearest chair without making any movement to return the salute. Lorrie was still standing almost awkwardly, in her surprise. One might have said the girl had intentionally evaded her. Paula was arrayed in her familiar style of over-ornamentation, the pale blue fabric of her dress all but obscured by embroidery and cascading laces; through the sheer folds of the waist there was visible yet more embroidery threaded with pink ribbons, delicately enticing. Her hat was a cloud of flowers, butterflies, rhinestone buckles, chiffon rosettes; she had correct white silk gloves, correct white canvas shoes; enough must have been spent on the toilette, one would have supposed, to make even Paula supremely happy, but she did not look happy. Her Dresden-china face wore a fretful and tired expression oddly out of place on it.

"We got back Saturday; they didn't get the right day in the paper," she said in a wearily complaining voice; "and they said we'd been in Atlantic City ever since we left Palm Beach, and we hadn't at all. We *were* in Atlantic City, but we've been in New York for four weeks. I wish we hadn't come home. I didn't *want* to come home. There isn't anybody here I want to see. Isn't it horrid and hot? Oh, I *am* so tired!"

Lorrie and her mother — of whose greeting and ex-

tended hand Miss Jameson had taken no notice — surveyed her in a momentary silence, each thinking the same thought with a certain compassion; namely, that the poor child had never been taught any manners, and not being clever or observant or perhaps fine-natured enough to acquire them of herself, the lack would show more and more as she got older. The pause, brief as it was, startled her self-consciousness.

“What’s the matter? What are you both looking at me that way for? Don’t I look all right? Do I — don’t I — is there anything the matter with me?” she demanded sharply, darting a glance full of suspicion from one to the other; and straightened her figure with an effort; she had allowed herself to droop heavily in the Professor’s wide, rough, old splint-bottomed chair. And she began to make nervous, fluttering gestures about her hair and flowery hat and laces and ribbons. “Do tell me if I don’t look right anywhere!” she entreated.

“Your dress is all right, my dear; it’s so pretty we couldn’t help staring at it, that’s all. And your hat is on straight, don’t worry!” said Mrs. Gilbert, hastily, a good deal amused at this characteristic anxiety. “But you *do* look tired, Paula,” she added in a kind concern; “you must have been doing too much.”

“Oh, no — that is, may be I have, I guess — but I’ll — I’ll be all right in a little,” Paula said, fingering her dress mechanically; “it’s only being tired that makes me look this way —”

“Travelling around so much is really hard work,” suggested Lorrie, sympathetically.

“Yes, that’s it. I hate to look ugly, though. Do you think I’m getting fat?” She turned her eyes to Lorrie, with so tragic an inquiry that the older girl, kind-hearted as she was, could hardly keep back her laugh; *fat* was the utter abhorrence, the



abominable thing, the secret enemy and terror of the Jamesons, mother and daughter.

"Why, no, Paula, you're not a bit fatter," Lorrie made haste to assure her; "that is, just a little, maybe; you're always nice and round and no bones showing, you know. But I think you're thinner in the face, if anything." In fact, Paula's small, regular features did look rather pinched, and she was unnaturally sallow.

"I'm tired," she repeated, prodding at a crack in the porch floor with the ferule of her expensive *lingerie* parasol. "I didn't *want* to come back to this old town, anyhow," said Paula, jabbing at the floor petulantly. She raised her head with an abrupt motion; her face suddenly flushed, all but her tightly drawn lips, which kept an unwholesome lead color. For the instant she was almost homely; it was startling. "Lorrie," she said, in a high, accusing tone. "I never knew you were engaged. I never knew until I got a copy of our paper and saw it in the *Jottings*, when we were in Atlantic City; I never knew. When did it happen? It didn't say when it happened. Did it happen before I went away?" She leaned forward; her eyes and whole face burned.

"Why — why — I — I don't know —" stammered Lorrie, taken aback at the other's fevered interest. "I don't remember whether you were still at home or not."

"Well, anyhow, you know when it happened, I should hope. You know when he asked you," said Paula, with a violent impatience. Lorrie and her mother felt the same inward recoil; for the first time Paula seemed to them actually coarse. Her shrill voice was coarse; her eager, persistent curiosity was coarse. "When *was* it?" she reiterated imperatively.

"In — in the winter — it was some time in the winter," said Lorrie, at last, with difficulty.

"Oh!" Paula relapsed into the chair with a movement of her shoulder indicating open disbelief. "I don't see why you don't want to talk about it." And after a second of angry silence, she burst out, vehemently reproachful: "Why didn't you tell me, Lorrie? You knew you were going to be engaged to him. You knew you were going to say yes the minute he asked you. You knew he'd ask you; you had it all fixed up, you know you did. Why didn't you tell me? I think you're *mean* — you — you — it wasn't fair. You ought to have told me at the very first. I think you're a mean old thing, Lorrie Gilbert —!" She choked off, her lips working, her eyes fastened on Lorrie with an unimaginable fierceness. It was plain to the other two women that Paula had brooded herself into a fury over this silly grievance, like the spoiled child she was; she might have been funny, but for the fact that there is always something a little dreadful about the anger of a fool.

"I didn't think you'd care so much, Paula," Lorrie said, kindly setting herself to appease the girl; "and besides, I didn't tell anybody *particularly*, you know. It was announced so that everybody would know all at once —"

"Is that your ring? Did he give you that?" Paula interrupted hoarsely, thrusting her hand out suddenly and seizing the other's.

"Yes."

Paula examined it closely for a minute. "I guess it's a real diamond," she said at length, dropping the hand as unexpectedly as she had snatched it. All at once, she seemed to have forgot her complaint; indeed, she was by nature too amiable or too indolent to keep herself in such a state of ferment for any length of time. "Has everybody gone away?" she asked. "To that old war, I mean? Your brother went, didn't he?"

"Yes. Bob's at Key West, now," said Lorrie in

the vigorously cheerful style she always adopted in her mother's presence.

"I heard Mr. Cortwright went, too," said Paula, working the parasol tip around and around in a knot hole, intently.

"Yes. Campaigning seems to suit him. He's been very well, and enjoying himself!" Lorrie's mother answered this time; and now it was her turn to assume the artificial confidence! Neither of them was in the least deceived by it; but if mothers and daughters should cease to practise these gallant and tender hypocrisies, what would be the use of mothers and daughters, or of women at all?

"Do you know where he is, all the time?" Paula asked, worrying the knot hole.

"Why, of course. He's at Tampa with the troops, unless they've been moved — and nobody knows what they are going to do from one hour to the next: but that was the last we heard."

"He — he writes to you, I suppose?"

"To *me*?" said Mrs. Gilbert, with a little indulgent smile; "I'm afraid, my dear child, I'm very much afraid he's never given *me* a thought! But Lorrie has been getting a letter every day, strange to say!" She gave her daughter a look full of affectionate mischief and fun. Lorrie colored faintly; she wished Phil *would* write every day.

"Are you sure all *your* letters get to him? How do you address them?" Paula said next.

"Why, to his regiment, you know."

"Well, I — I supposed so; I wasn't sure," Paula said. She abandoned the porch floor, laid the parasol across her lap, and began an equally automatic and earnest fidgeting with the bit of pompadour ribbon elaborately knotted on its handle.

"Are you still getting ready to be married, Lorrie? Mr. Cortwright might get shot in a fight, you know,"

she said shrilly and distinctly; and looked up as the other winced and paled with an extraordinary watchful curiosity. About the speech and manner there was that childish brutality not unnatural to Paula; it repelled, partly because one felt the hopelessness of trying to illuminate her. A child might mature, might learn, but this girl, never! There went through Mrs. Gilbert's mind, even in the midst of her distress and indignation, a weird fancy presenting Paula as one of the Psyches, the Undines, the lovely creatures without a soul that figure in countless old-world legends. "She's hardly responsible!" thought the mother, with a kind of impatient pity.

"Well, I—I try not to think about that," Lorrie said with an effort.

"I don't see how you can help thinking about it—I'm sure *I* would. I wouldn't know whether to go on with my clothes or not," said the other. She eyed Lorrie with a return of her morbid interest. "Don't it make you feel awfully when you think of the times he's kissed you? He *did* kiss you, didn't he?"

Lorrie sat, turning white and red, incapable of a word; and it was Mrs. Gilbert who answered in a cold voice, stiffening to her very marrow: "Please *don't*, Paula! It's not necessary to talk about—about things like that."

"I suppose not. It's no use, anyhow," Paula assented dully. There was another silence. "I *wish* we hadn't come back!" she burst out again. "I wish we'd stayed in Florida. Then we'd have been right near it—the War, you know—we'd have seen them all—all the soldiers and everything—we'd have seen—" her face puckered together, she put up her hands with a frantic movement; the parasol slid down unheeded. Paula began to rock herself back and forth, and the other two women saw to their fright and pain that her slender shoulders were heaving vio-

lently ; it was like seeing a bruised humming-bird in torments.

"Mercy ! Why, Paula — why, what is the matter ? Don't you feel well ? Are you sick ? What is it that hurts you ? Tell me where it hurts ! Don't cry that way !" cried out Mrs. Gilbert, all her anger dissolved in kindness ; she ran to the girl with little soft, purring ejaculations, and took the pretty, trivial, bedizened figure into her maternal arms. "There now, there now ! Tell me what's the matter !"

"Oh, I'm tired — I'm sick — oh, *I wish* we'd never come back !" sobbed Paula, wildly. Lorrie and her mother exchanged a glance above the flowered hat. For goodness' sake ! Crying and broken-hearted this way because she hadn't seen the army ! both thought. But after all, that was just like poor Paula. They tried to comfort her with much the same means they might have employed had she been eight years old ; and Paula sobbed on with long, shuddering gasps and moans like a child, sitting rigid between them, not yielding to their caresses.

"I'll go back with you — you're not well enough to go by yourself that long, hot walk. I'll just go along with you," Lorrie assured her, when they had got her somewhat quieted at last ; they rescued the parasol, and straightened Paula's frills, and dabbed her face and eyes with soothing cold water, and fetched the talcum powder and the smelling-salts, and, in short, performed all the hundred and one small offices women find necessary to such an occasion. "Maybe it would be better if you lay down a little while — don't you think ?" they suggested kindly.

"I c-can't lie down in this d-dress," said Paula, pitifully ; "it would spoil it. No, you don't need to come, Lorrie. You don't need to come with me. I can go by myself. I don't *want* you to come !" She spoke with hysterical entreaty, looking at the other

with something like fear, almost as strong as aversion in her blue eyes that were ordinarily blank and beautiful as a mountain lake.

"Oh, now, don't be a goose!" said Lorrie in good-natured and sensible command. "We can't let you go off feeling this way. It's no trouble; I haven't got a thing to do. S-sh, now! Don't say another word. I'm *going*!"

Paula submitted as unexpectedly as she had rebelled, and dragged feebly down the steps, her arm interlocked with Lorrie's, who walked beside, hatless in the unconventional summer style of our suburbs, erect and firm, with all her chestnut-colored hair ruffling and shining in the sun. Lorrie was not a tall woman nor of strong build, yet in contrast to her companion she produced a surprising effect of superiority; perhaps it was not wholly physical; one might have fancied that a greater dignity of spirit in her had magically become visible. Mrs. Gilbert herself, looking after them, wondered aloud. "Why, I didn't realize Lorrie was so — so —" she mused, and turned and went back into the house without being able to find the proper adjective.

The two girls went on slowly and silently, the elder in a good deal of private anxiety, as she noted her charge's color wane, and her hollow eyes, and the unwholesome moisture clinging around her taut lips. In fact, Paula's strength barely held out for the journey, and it was with unmeasured relief that Lorrie at length beheld the sprawling, decorated façade of the hotel looming ahead of them. She got the other up the steps, helped by a porter who chanced to be passing, and grasped the situation; all the bell-boys stared with wondering looks, alert; and an expensively dressed woman with gray hair strolling along the corridor gave the couple a leisurely survey, and, after they had gone by, turned and looked after them with shrewd and sinister curiosity. Mrs. Jameson, rather cross at being

roused from her regular morning nap, which formed a part of the exercises in physical preservation and improvement about which she was always most systematic, came to the door of their room, in a flowing white negligé, embroidered with garlands of lilac, wisteria, and what-not by some Gallic artist of the needle, with lilac-hued ribbons floating and intermingling with its flounces. Rich odors accompanied the lady; indeed, they gushed out of the darkened bedroom (which was littered with other ribbons, and wilted flowers, and wrapping-papers, and odd slippers, and a bath towel or two, and a pair of pink brocade corsets draped over the back of a chair) in a volume Lorrie found almost suffocating; and Paula, who nevertheless must have been accustomed to this atmosphere, reeled against her companion.

"Well, I *must* say, Paula —" her mother began, sharply; she checked herself at sight of the visitor. "Oh, Miss Gilbert! Do excuse my hair, please. I always put it up on kid curlers this way, you know. I don't approve of curling-irons, they're so bad for the hair —"

"Let me get Paula to the lounge, please, Mrs. Jameson; she's not feeling very well," Lorrie interrupted her ruthlessly; she had to push the surprised woman aside to enter.

"I'd like a drink of water," said Paula in a vague, distant whisper.

Mrs. Jameson stood stupefied and entirely useless as Lorrie briskly and largely by main strength got her daughter to the sofa, opened her dress, threw up the window, ran and came back with a tumbler of ice water and a fan — all in five seconds and with an ease, noiselessness, and certainty of movement such as Mrs. Jameson had never witnessed in her life. "Why, why — what is it? What's the matter with Paula?" she repeated two or three times, trailing ineffectually up and

down in Lorrie's wake. She stopped by the sofa. "Are you sick, Paula?"

"I'm afraid it's this heat," said Lorrie, kneeling and fanning swiftly. "Just sip the water, Paula, just a little at a time. That's right — yes, you *can* swallow it — see! — that's right. It's better for you a little at a time. Now lie down flat. No, let me take away the cushion, Mrs. Jameson; she'll feel better with her head low."

"Is it the heat, Paula?" asked her mother, helplessly. "Do you think it's the heat? I don't know what to do for a heat-stroke. What's best, Miss Gilbert?"

"I think she'd better have a doctor," said Lorrie; "there's one in the hotel, isn't there? I'll get him —" She was on her feet with the words.

"No, *no*, I don't want him, I don't want any doctor!" said Paula, faintly, struggling upright with wild eyes. She clutched desperately at Lorrie's skirts. "I won't have the doctor, Lorrie; I won't, I *won't*!" She began a kind of weak screaming.

"He's old school — the one in the hotel is — and we've always been homeopathic — the medicine is so much easier to take —" Mrs. Jameson explained feebly. Lorrie looked at her, at the sick girl crying and writhing on the sofa, at the hot, untidy, perfumed room, with a sudden overmastering repugnance; the next instant she chided herself sternly for it.

"I'll get any other doctor you want, Mrs. Jameson," she compelled herself to say with gentleness; "Paula *must* have somebody — you can see that for yourself."

"Well, Doctor Booth —" Mrs. Jameson said, hesitating; she was interrupted by Paula's high-pitched wailing.

"No, don't — oh, *don't* — oh, *please* don't!" She beat the air with her hands. "I'll tell — I'll tell — oh, *please* —!"

Lorrie sped down the hall, — the hysterical screeches



sinking to hysterical chokings and mutterings within the room behind her. She planned quickly. Doctor Booth's office, fortunately, was only about half a dozen squares away; he could reach the hotel in a few minutes; but if he was not in, she would call up the next nearest — who would that be? — Doctor Livingston — he was "old school," but pooh! what difference did *that* make? It was getting on towards noon, not a very good hour to go in search of doctors. She debated whether she had not better take it on herself to telephone for a trained nurse, too, since it was plain that foolish, scared woman in the lavender embroideries would be absolutely of no account in a sick-room, and Paula might be going to be seriously ill for some time. Lorrie associated Florida with malarial germs, and New York and Atlantic City with incautious eating and drinking; poor water — typhoid — over-fatigue — all the alarmist reports of the day crowded into her mind. And then the sound of her own name, distractedly called, arrested her with her finger on the button to summon the elevator. "Miss Gilbert! Miss Gilbert!"

Mrs. Jameson rushed up, gasping; her face was ash color — the fine lines and crows' feet in it showed mercilessly; but she had forgot all about them, she forgot her kid curlers and her negligée, even with the elevator man imminent in his cab. She ran and grasped the front of Lorrie's white shirtwaist with trembling hands, on which all sorts of rings and jewels glittered keenly. "Don't get the doctor!" she managed to get out in a strangled whisper. "For God's sake, don't! That is, — if you *could* get one — no, no, don't!" She paused breathlessly, in a tortured indecision, terrible to see on her doll-featured face. Lorrie stood, sorely perplexed, genuinely alarmed.

"But, Mrs. Jameson — !" she began to protest.

"Is there a doctor here that nobody knows — that nobody ever *has* — that isn't *anybody's* doctor?" de-

manded the older woman, holding her fiercely. "If you *did* know of one —"

"Why, no — how could I — why, what for — why —" Lorrie was utterly bewildered.

"No, no, don't call anybody, then!" reiterated Mrs. Jameson, releasing her. "I don't want anybody, do you hear? I won't have anybody. I'm her mother, and I don't want any doctor for her, and it's none of your business, do you hear me?" she said with stifled violence. She thrust her face almost into Lorrie's. "Don't you *dare* —!" All at once she became a bel-dame, a vulgar fury, a dishevelled hag before whom the young woman shrank in some feeling not far from terror.

Lorrie went home, a little shaken by the morning's experiences; very likely she was already somewhat overstrained by these recent trying weeks. "Mother," she said gravely, as the two ladies sat down to their luncheon; "I'm afraid I've been doing that poor Mrs. Jameson an awful injustice all this while. She is very much fonder of Paula than I thought — just as fond as other mothers are of their children — just like *you*! Of course she didn't act the way you would if I were suddenly taken sick, but she's just as frightened and anxious. Why, do you know, when she finally did realize that Paula was sick, she — why, she was just like a crazy woman!"

## CHAPTER XII

### IN WHICH WE PACK OUR VALISES

DURING all this time, the unimpressible Mr. Kendrick worked along, according to his habit, as has been recited, paying only a passing attention to the history-making in progress around him. Van himself was making, not history, but what was much better worth while, from his point of view, Money — yes, Money with a capital letter. Old Joshua Van Cleve, who, if popular sayings can be listened to, must have had occasion to turn over more than once in the quarter century or so since he went to his last grim bed, at witnessing the loose-handed administration of his worldly goods — Joshua, I say, might at last rest in peace; his grandson was a chip of his own solid and well-hewn block! The rest of us, for that matter, could also behold the fine moral spectacle of Virtue getting its due handsomely, constantly offered to us in romance and melodrama, but seldom, alas, upon this real and mundane stage. If ever a man deserved to succeed, it was Van Cleve; and he did succeed. The Good Apprentice prospered, for once, as all Good Apprentices should. He was shrewd, he was cool, he was just, he was unfathomably patient; and without question his whole heart was in the work. Mr. Kendrick had nowhere else to bestow it; so that steady and reliable organ beat, presumably, only for himself.

It is true he was very good to his family, indulging their whims as far as he was able, supplying their wants with the utmost liberality, and rarely inquiring how they

disposed of the funds which he poured into that apparently bottomless hopper. "They're mighty good women—all of 'em, even Uncle Stan; he's about the same as a woman," Van used to reflect humorously; "good and kind, and I guess they've got as much sense as most women that aren't nearly so nice, either, by jiminy!" saying which he would methodically file away their letters asking for money, or acknowledging the receipt of it, in the drawer he used for that purpose. In time there got to be a stack of these documents. . . . "Dearest Van: Your noble, generous, splendid check came this morning. You dear old fellow, I'm so afraid you went without something yourself, to provide us. What would we not all give to take this burden off of you! But never mind, Van darling, some day it will all be made up to you, that is my devout belief." "My dear, fine boy: We cannot bear to say anything to you about *money* after all your superb generosity to us, but when I have laid the *facts* before you, I think you will see this is an *imperative emergency*. Since I had grippe last winter, the doctor has constantly urged our getting out of New York, and now he enthusiastically indorses our Tarrytown plan. Of course, it will be a little extra expense to move there, but once *there*, the cost of living is much less, and the air will be beneficial to us all. . . . " etc., etc. Van Cleve used to skim through this part with a highly irreverent inattention; he knew from experience that towards page three the ladies would finally come to the point, "get down to business"; that is, divulge the amount they wanted. The young fellow acquitted them of anything like conscious hypocrisy; there was nothing mean nor shabby about them; they were honestly fond and proud of him, he knew, honestly sorry that they must be dependent on him. He supposed all women (except *one*, perhaps) to be the same. And anyhow, were they not his kin? They belonged to him; and he wouldn't give a Some-

thing for a man who couldn't take care of his women, and give them what they wanted! He had all their letters tied up in packets, year by year, and labelled in his neat, square handwriting: "*M. V. C. Lucas 5/19/98, \$75. Answd. 5/22/98.*" "*E. Lucas 7/15/'02, \$50,*" and so on. "Don't they ever write to you about anything but money?" was once asked of him. "Oh, yes. But that's the only important thing."

Being now a bachelor at large upon the world, the young gentleman sometimes forsook his boarding-house of an evening and made a call, or recreated himself at the theatre or at the club which he had recently found he was able to join; indeed, this last was probably his most favored resort, for, except with other men, Van had no great social gift. The girls, in general, were glad enough to see him, even when he forgot that he had come to visit them, and got to talking politics or the stock market with their fathers! Almost any sensible girl would have been ready to like Van Cleve, would have appreciated his plain good qualities, and have shown him a not discouraging face; but unluckily the young man had no idea of this amiable disposition on their part. I fear Mr. Kendrick was not at all a ladies' man. They appeared to him mostly as pretty, decorative creatures, sharing doubtless the funny and occasionally irritating forcible-feeblenesses of his own womenkind. It was a matter of increasing wonder to him that any man should voluntarily elect to spend his life with one of them. "Well, it wouldn't be all roses for any girl that had to live with *me!*" he sometimes retorted upon himself, satirically honest. Van never admitted even in this privacy that there was always an exception lurking in the back of his mind. There was *one* girl — heigh-ho! He believed he could have lived with her and made her happy.

It was to her house that he went in the hot summer night of the day of Paula's ill-starred visit there. Van

Cleve, too, had had a letter from Bob; and found no difficulty in persuading himself that it would be a kindness to take it over for the family to read. Of course, Lorrie didn't care particularly about seeing *him* — he knew *that*; and news from the man she was engaged to was all that really interested her, nevertheless —. So Mr. Kendrick left his fellow-boarders on the porch, with their rocking-chairs and their fans, and journeyed over to Warwick Lane in the face of an ominous cloud-bank all along the western horizon, intermittently streaked and splashed with lightning. Lorrie was sitting, as usual, on the Gilbert front steps, alone in the sultry dusk; all the front steps up and down the little suburban street were thus decorated at this hour, and you might hear the young people's laughter, and a banjo twanging here and there; everybody hadn't gone to the War. As he came up the walk, Van, through a lamplit square of window, could perceive the Professor bending over a sheaf of writing — examination-papers, very likely — and Mrs. Gilbert darning a stocking on the other side of the table; the two tired gray heads showed distinctly.

The family had also heard from Robert, Van Cleve learned, and his own news was of no later date. He and Lorrie agreed that the trip seemed to be doing Bob good, and he was getting a lot of fun out of it, anyhow; his letters were so happy. "I don't believe it's the — the sort of fun that will harm him, either, do you, Van?" the girl asked earnestly. "Of course there're all kinds of men in an army — a camp like that, but they must be mostly all *right*, or they couldn't *stay* in the army."

"They're under pretty strict discipline — the regulars, that is, I believe," said Van Cleve, trying to be diplomatic. "Anyhow, it suits Bob better than anything he has ever tried. He was crazy to go, and it wouldn't have done any good to have kept him at home." During and since the excitement, Lorrie and Van had

tacitly agreed to forget their differences over Bob — to bury the hatchet. The old friendly confidence was restored; and if another person's name would be forever cropping up, Van Cleve realized with a twinge that this was natural and inevitable. Her lover was constantly in Lorrie's mind, and it was right and proper that he should be; then how could she help talking about him?

"That's what I tell Mother, but she can't help worrying, you know," said Lorrie, answering his last speech; "I wish Bob could be more with — with Mr. Cortwright, but they don't seem to have seen much of each other. The camp's perfectly huge, they say, swarming with men. And then Philip — Mr. Cortwright — must be on duty a great part of his time," the girl added, with a note of pride; "he said in one of his letters he wouldn't have much chance to look after Bob."

Van Cleve, who still kept to his ideas — doubtless unfair and prejudiced ones — about the benefit Robert might receive from an association with this gentleman, did not reply for a moment. Then he spoke, overlooking Mr. Cortwright. "I suppose if we could be there at Tampa or Key West and see it, we'd laugh at the notion of finding or looking out for anybody. It must be an awful mix-up," he said wisely.

There was a pause while the thunder began to rumble overhead.

"Do you suppose cannon sounds like that?" Lorrie said.

"Don't know. I've a notion it's shorter and *boomier*, somehow — not quite so much like a lot of empty hogsheads rolling downstairs," Van suggested. "Your mother was near some of the battle-fields in the Civil War, wasn't she? She must know what sort of noise the guns make."

"Yes, but I don't like to ask her. I think it pains her to be reminded of it."

They glanced at the open window.

"How old your father and mother are beginning to look, Lorrie," Van said involuntarily; the knowledge came to him with an unwelcome shock.

"Do you think so?" she said, troubled; "they haven't been well, either of them; and Bob's never out of their minds for one instant, you know. It does seem as if we'd had so many upsetting things happen lately; and when people get older, they can't stand them so well. Now to-day Paula Jameson —" Lorrie gave him some description of the girl's seizure. "I hope it's nothing serious, but it certainly was enough to frighten anybody to see it — it was so sudden," she concluded. "Mother's been what she calls 'as nervous as a witch' all day. I'm glad she didn't have to have anything to do with Mrs. Jameson, anyhow — Van, it was *awful*! That poor thing was completely frightened out of what little sense she has — is that somebody coming in?"

The visitor was Mrs. Jameson, walking fast. "Gracious! Suppose she heard me! I hope I wasn't speaking very loud!" Lorrie ejaculated inwardly, panic-struck; and greeted the other in a fluster that made Van Cleve smile in the dark. "Why — why — good evening, Mrs. Jameson. A — er — how is Paula?" And then, as the girl's mother came up and stood breathing hurriedly and excitedly without a word, Lorrie added in quick alarm; "she's not worse? She's not going to be very sick? What is it? A — a fever? Not a fever, I hope?"

Mrs. Jameson spoke at last in a hasty, fluttering voice, catching herself and swallowing at every other word. "No, it's not that — she's better — that is, she — she'll be better — I don't know — *who's that?*" she cried out shrilly, and darted a step forward, peering into the shadow where Van Cleve sat. "Is that your brother? Is that you, Bob Gilbert?"

"Why no, Bob's not home — he's gone away — he's



with the troops down in Florida — didn't Paula tell you?" Lorrie explained, a good deal startled, as Van Cleve got to his feet and came into the light, himself somewhat surprised. Mrs. Jameson fell back unsteadily and stared at him. "It's Mr. Kendrick, Van Cleve Kendrick, you know. Why, I was sure you knew Van Cleve," said Lorrie. "Paula knows him." And she asked again, unconvinced: "Is Paula better? Can't I do something for her?"

"Oh, I've met Miss Jameson lots of times —" Van was saying, a little embarrassed.

"Oh, yes, yes — I — I *beg* your pardon, Mr. Kendrick, of *course* — I couldn't see who it was — I *beg* your pardon —" Mrs. Jameson said in a manner that so laboriously parodied her accustomed artificial graces that the others observed it with a kind of incredulity. She put up a hand to her bare throat, as if to help the control of her voice. "I — I thought for a minute your brother might have come back, and — and I wanted to see him on business — a — a little business," she said to Lorrie.

"I'm sorry Bob's not home —" Lorrie stammered, confounded by this statement; "I can give you his last address, though, but we're not sure where he'll be —" she was going on to say, when Mrs. Jameson cut her short with a sudden wild ejaculation and gesture; she threw out both hands as if she rent and tore away some bond, resigned some struggle with a need stronger than herself. "It don't make any difference!" she said loud and harshly; "where's his father? I want to see his father. Is *he* here?"

"*Father?*" repeated Lorrie, blankly. The request was stranger, if that could be, than the first. Professor Gilbert had never met, had never even seen, Mrs. Jameson in his life; it was impossible to imagine their having a single interest in common, a single thought or feeling. "*Father?* Why yes, he's here — he's in the house. Do

you want — I mean, shall I call him — I mean, won't you come in?"

"I want to see your father," said Mrs. Jameson again, vehemently. "Is that him in there? That gray-headed man?" She advanced into the full light, showing a face and figure in uncanny disorder; she had a black lace dress and black hat flung on anyhow; tag-ends of lavender ribbon and white edging stuck out inappropriately about the corsage; the plumes of her hat swept and bobbed and dipped over her big white neck and shoulders that showed fleshily under the figured net draperies; and wisps of her red hair blew or hung stringily out of curl about her. The two young people looked at her almost appalled; for terror and misery stared out of the woman's eyes, and walked in this slattern finery, on those pinched, French-heeled slippers. "The poor thing *has* gone out of her head, sure enough! Paula must be going to die!" both of them thought. For an instant they stood helpless, not knowing what to do or say.

"I want to see your father," said Mrs. Jameson, moving towards the door, still with that air of having thrown down all barriers. She turned quickly. "*You'd* better go away!" she said, her glance comprehending them both. "Why don't you go away? I want to see him by himself."

"But Mrs. Jameson, father can't — he doesn't — he won't know who you are — just wait a minute — only a minute, won't you?" Lorrie expostulated, trying to gather up her own wits, and to speak soothingly and with composure; "hadn't you better sit down here, and — and let me get you something? You — you're nervous, you know. Can't you tell *me* what it is? Is it something about Paula? Tell me, won't you?"

Mrs. Jameson shook off her hands. "Let me alone!" she said savagely; and thrust them both aside and went

into the house. Lorrie and Van Cleve hesitated behind her, each questioning the other's face.

"That's just the way she was to-day when she found how sick poor Paula was!" whispered the girl. Unconsciously she laid a hand on his arm. "Mercy, I'm glad you're here, Van! *What* do you suppose is the matter? She acts as if she might do *anything*! And yet she said something about Paula's being better!"

"Oh, she's just frightened, I guess," said Van Cleve, reassuringly. Mrs. Jameson's manner reminded him of his aunt's when that lady reached a high pitch of excitement. "You'll find there's nothing much wrong," said the young man, wagging his head knowingly, as he followed her. The storm was rising noisily, clapping the doors, and sending the Professor's papers scurrying all about the room. There came a dash of rain.

"Lorrie! Van! Better run and close the windows!" Mrs. Gilbert called out. She dropped her work and ran to the door. "Come in, children, both of you! Is there somebody else out there? I thought I heard somebody — Mrs. Jameson!"

The other shouldered past without heeding her. "Is that Bob Gilbert's father? Are you his father?" she demanded.

Professor Gilbert, who had been gathering sheets of foolscap from under the fender where they had blown and lodged, straightened up, smoothing them in his hands, and turned around. He pushed up his glasses and green shade to survey her amazedly.

"My name is Gilbert, madame," he said, recovering; and made a little courteous, old-fashioned gesture of apology. "Er — who is it, if you please?"

"It's Mrs. Jameson, Sam — you know — Paula Jameson's mother — you know Paula," Mrs. Gilbert interposed hastily. "My husband, Professor Gilbert, Mrs. Jameson," she added conventionally, notwithstanding her surprise; she supposed that the other had run

in for a refuge from the rain. And — “Won’t you sit down?” said the hospitable little lady, seeking to put the guest at her ease. Still Mrs. Jameson did not move or speak; and in the silence, Lorrie’s mother suddenly sensed impending calamity. “How is Paula? Is she —? It’s not *serious*?” she asked quickly. Her eyes searched the other mother’s face, and whatever she divined there, stark horror all at once laid hold of her. “Merciful Heaven, isn’t she going to — to get well? She — she’s not going to — to —” she could not finish.

Mrs. Jameson glanced at her impatiently. She made a movement towards the Professor, then checked herself as it seemed unwillingly, and looked around on the others. “I said for all of you to go away.” Then, as nobody moved immediately in the common bewilderment, she threw out both hands again in a paroxysm of impotent anger. “My God, won’t anybody listen to me?” she screamed out violently, and stamped the floor; “I *know* I’m acting queer — I know it as well as you do! But I’m not crazy — not yet, anyhow!” And with this outburst she seemed on a sudden to repossess herself! It was as if some unimaginable flood of desperate emotion had deluged and devastated her soul and rushed on, leaving her to the ultimate calm — the calm of defeat. She went up to Professor Gilbert and spoke steadily. “I have come about your son. I mean the one that’s called Bob. I want you to send for him to come back. He’s got to come back here.”

“Bob? You mean Bob?” said the father, uncomprehendingly; “*you* want him to come back? But madame, I — I don’t understand. What is the matter? Why —?”

“Because he’s ruined my girl — that’s why!” said Mrs. Jameson; and as Professor Gilbert moved with an inarticulate sound, she repeated the words.

There was a speechless moment. Outside the storm roared past and shook the four corners of the house;

but for the people in the Gilbert sitting-room, silence engulfed the universe. Mrs. Jameson stood haggardly in the midst of them, her hand clutching at her throat; she was spent utterly and could feel and think no further. For that matter, thought was beyond the others, too; nobody was thinking; their minds stood still, clogged with formless protest. Van Cleve, who more than any one present had the habit of self-mastery, was the first to recognize that Mrs. Jameson was not insane; she was most tragically sane, and she believed herself to be telling the truth. It might be monstrous — it *was* monstrous — but it explained and justified her. After another chaotic instant, Lorrie came to the same realization; strangely enough, her first coherent thought in that flash of miserable illumination was not of her brother, not of Bob's guilt or innocence, but of Paula. Lorrie understood now; sick horror and pity surged over her.

Mrs. Gilbert spoke, grasping at her first definite idea; it was more like an impulse uttered than a thought. "My son never did that thing. Our Bob never did that," she said.

"Will you send for him?" said the other mother.

"Mrs. Jameson," said the Professor, collecting himself; "I — I cannot believe — I do not mean that I doubt *you* — I mean I — I —" He stopped; then made another effort. "I trust you will not misunderstand me — I trust you will bear with me when I say I can't believe — I don't believe my son would so wrong —" He had to stop again.

"Would Paula lie about it? What for?" said Mrs. Jameson.

The rest looked at one another, groping for an answer. Suddenly Mrs. Gilbert became aware that her daughter and a young man were in the room — a young unmarried man and woman. "You oughtn't to be here, Lorrie — you and Van," she said distressfully.

Van Cleve obediently turned to the door, in a turmoil of shame and sympathy; but Bob's father interposed quickly. "Van Cleve — Van! Don't go! You're Bob's friend — don't go!"

"Oh, mother, it doesn't make any difference — nothing makes any difference except whether this is true or not. That's all that matters!" said Lorrie. They looked at her. It was so. Nothing mattered but the truth. The kindly, well-meant screens and shams of daily intercourse were all abolished; there they stood, men and women, with their miserable knowledge, like people around a corpse.

"Did she — did Paula tell you so?" Mrs. Gilbert asked, unconsciously clenching her hands together. "Did she say it — it was Bob?"

"Yes. I made her tell me. She didn't want to, but I made her. Will you send for him?"

Mrs. Gilbert put out a hand blindly and caught hold of a table and clung to it, trembling. It was that little old table with the decanter of peach-brandy, and the thing rocked over now, struck against the wall, and went smashing unregarded to the floor, and the heavy, gummy liquor splashed and ran down over the wall in a thick stream. That was like the stain on the family honor; it would never come off.

"I cannot believe it," Professor Gilbert said again. "Bob has been wild — he has been wild, but he — he —" torturing doubt appeared on his face; his eyes sought Van Cleve's in unhappy appeal. "Van Cleve, you've always been his friend — you know him better than anybody — much better than I. I've never known how to — to do right with Bob," said the father, humbly. "Do *you* believe it?"

The young man hung his head; he too had been thinking that Bob was wild, was weak. "All that talk about never harming anybody but himself, what does that amount to? If a fellow lets go of himself one

way, he's bound to let go of himself other ways," he thought gloomily. "But if he *did* do this, by God, I know it wasn't all Bob's fault!" Aloud, he could only say huskily, "Mr. Gilbert, I don't *want* to believe it." The words sounded as hard as his hard face looked, yet they were uttered with real suffering.

"Are you going to send for him?" said Mrs. Jameson.

There was another unhappy silence; they could hear the water rustling along the gutter and down-spout at the corner of the porch; the storm had come, and burst, and passed since they had been in this room, and not one of them had noticed it; and it was not yet ten minutes! Mrs. Gilbert at last spoke, raising her head. "Bob shall come back, Mrs. Jameson," she said, firmly and clearly. "He *must* come back. If he — if they have done wrong, it will be righted. Young people don't always seem to *know* — they don't mean to be wicked, they're just foolish —" She paused, fighting for self-control; and before their mental vision there rose the picture of the pretty, little, soft, silly girl, the reckless, good-natured, self-indulgent young man. It was sad, it was shameful; but was it so very strange, was it wholly their fault? "Why weren't you taking better care of your daughter, woman?" the one mother wanted to cry out. "And why didn't you put better principles into your son, Ellen Gilbert?" Conscience inquired sternly. "It shall be made *right* — Bob shall make it right — we want it as much as you do," Mrs. Gilbert began again. She turned to her husband with a fevered eagerness. "We'll telegraph him — can't we telegraph? I mean to-night — now — at once; can't we?"

"If — if we knew where he is," said the Professor, in helplessness. He took off the eye-shade and spectacles which he had been wearing all this while, and laid them down under the lamp with nervous and shaky move-

ments; on a sudden, he seemed to have become an old man — old and infirm. "Let me think — I have to think a little," he said, brushing a hand across his eyes.

Lorrie went to her mother's side with an anxious look into her face, and picked up Mrs. Gilbert's hand and began to stroke it gently. "Bob wouldn't come anyhow for a telegram, mother. How could you tell him what was the matter?" she said quietly. "What could we say in a telegram, or even a letter? Never mind, mother dear, one of us will go and find him and bring him home. Never mind!"

"I was thinking of that," said her father, with his drawn brows. "I — could I see you at the bank tomorrow, Van Cleve?"

"No, no, you don't need to. I have money — I have *plenty* of money — I can get more!" Mrs. Jameson cried incoherently; her woman's mind rushed forward to an understanding while Van Cleve was yet wondering what the Professor meant to do, or wanted at the bank. She snatched out an ornate purse of gilded and wrought leather, with chains and trinkets dangling from it and tried to force it on him. "See, there's plenty — take it all — take it! I've got more — I can get more — it's my own money, you know. Don't wait for any banks, or letters, or anything! You've got to get him here *soon* — please don't wait!" Suddenly her features quivered; she dropped all the money at his feet and shrank back, covering her face, and a heavy sob shook her. The two men were inexpressibly touched by the sight, by the pitiful offering — and the two women, strange as it would seem, not at all. Yet they were both good, tender-hearted women. Lorrie stooped and painstakingly recovered the bills and silver and pennies that had scattered in every direction.

"We don't want this, Mrs. Jameson," she said coldly, returning it.

The other gazed at her affrightedly through her



tears. "I didn't m-mean any harm!" Paula's mother quavered. "I'm sorry to m-make trouble. I'm going to take Paula away somewhere, so nobody will know about it, but I c-couldn't help—" she broke down again. Her brief flame of courage and resolution had burned out; she could only plead and whimper weakly now.

"If you could manage it with your bank people, Van? I don't know much about business methods. I have never been obliged to — to raise money hurriedly before," said Professor Gilbert, in a pathetic anxiety; "my — my personal note —?"

"That's all right, Mr. Gilbert," Van Cleve said, inordinately relieved at the introduction of this safe, commonplace, familiar subject; he felt as if his feet were on solid ground at last. "I'll get the money for you, any amount you say — I'll fix all that —"

"You can't go, father," Lorrie interrupted. "You can't get away *now*. You'd have to explain —"

Her father's glance turned to the examination-papers. "I don't know —" he murmured; "I could make an arrangement, I think —"

"I will go," said Lorrie.

Her father and mother stared at her, startled. Mrs. Jameson, crumpled into a chair, ceased her moaning to gaze up at the girl in awed admiration and wonder. That a woman could speak or act with any sort of promptness, energy, or decision, coolly as if it was her habit, seemed to Paula's mother something abnormal; she did not like Lorrie and was afraid of her, yet trusted her devoutly. It was Van Cleve who began to protest.

"Why, Lorrie, you can't do that! You can't go running around trying to hunt up Bob. You haven't any idea what sort of places you might — that is, he might — you don't know what you're talking about. It's no place for women —"

"How about the nurses?" said Lorrie; "Miss Rodg-

ers — you know? At Christ's? — Miss Rodgers is going. She's going this week. She spoke to me the other day about it, because she'd heard I had said I'd like to go with the Red Cross. I could go with her."

"You can't! It's insane —!"

"Van's right, Lorrie; you oughtn't to think of going," said Mrs. Gilbert in alarm.

"Mother, you know Bob would listen to me — he'd pay more attention to me than to anybody else. I can do more with Bob than anybody else — more than you or father —"

"That's true," said Professor Gilbert with a kind of groan.

"Lorrie, don't talk that way — as if Bob had to be *made!*" said her mother, tremulously; "Bob will do right, as soon — as soon as he knows. I *know* he will. Bob's not *bad*. He may have been wild — ever so many young men are — but he's always done *right* in the end, or — or tried to. You *know* he has," said the poor mother, breaking down at last in her turn; "you oughtn't to talk that way about him — your own brother — and everybody's so against him, anyhow —!"

It was late when Van Cleve went out and called a carriage and put Mrs. Jameson into it to take her home — a silent and dreary journey, although the poor woman herself would probably have talked eagerly, in the relief and reaction of the moment, if she had had the slightest encouragement. "Do you think Miss — Miss Lorrie ought to go that way by herself? Do you think she really will, Mr. Kendrick?" she asked him, timidly. "I'd be afraid of my life. I don't see how she dares. She's very unusual, isn't she?" Mrs. Jameson added, remembering that she had heard something about the young man's devotion in that quarter, and with some idea of making herself agreeable. To her dismay, he scowled.

"Miss Gilbert won't be by herself," he said briefly.

"I know. That Miss Rodgers — that nurse, of course —" said Mrs. Jameson, hastily, perturbed. Van Cleve made no comment, glowering silently out of the carriage window at the night scene of shining wet pavements, tracked with lights, and the hurrying trolleys with their soaked storm curtains pulled tight. After a while, Mrs. Jameson ventured again, even more nervously than before, —

"Mr. Kendrick, you — you won't tell anybody?"

"Tell anybody?" echoed Van Cleve, not understanding.

"About us — about Paula — about this evening?" faltered Mrs. Jameson, leaning forward and clutching at his knee in her anxiety. "You won't tell?"

"No, I won't tell," said the young man, recoiling throughout his whole being. What was the woman made of? Or what, in Heaven's name, did she think he was made of?

"I'm ever so much obliged. You're doing a great deal for us. I'm awfully obliged," said Mrs. Jameson, weakly, conscious of a certain inadequacy about these phrases; but her pinchbeck vocabulary afforded nothing better. Van Cleve left her at her hotel, and paid the cabman and went off home. He went upstairs to his boarding-house room, and got a travelling-bag out of the closet.

## PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### IN WHICH WE CONCENTRATE AT TAMPA

ON a hot, wet, stifling day of June — it was the twenty-fourth or towards that date — a train from the North got into the station at Tampa, Florida, some six or seven hours late, as was not unusual, and discharged its passengers upon the cinder esplanade which was already crowded with men in uniform, men out of uniform, dogs, boys, crates, barrels, mules, colored women, drays, boxes labelled “6th Regmt. U. S. Inft. *Rush*” — “Lieut. W. W. Branscombe, 3d. Penn. Vol. Cav. *Personal*,” and so on. The train discharged into the middle of all this, and of the proportionate uproar and bewilderment, a little party of travellers, some of whom we ought to be able to recognize by this time. The girl in the gray coat-and-skirt suit with the pretty face, rather tired and pale just now, and with an anxious look in her brown eyes, which roam about as if there were somebody whom she half expects and half dreads to see — that is, of a surety, Miss Lorrie Gilbert. And there is an active, alert, well-built woman a head taller and five years older than Lorrie who must be the trained nurse, Miss Rodgers from Christ’s Hospital, sent down here to the kindred military establishment at Tampa, or Key West, she herself is uncertain which. But for her, I suppose the presence of that tall, raw-boned,

ungainly young man (V. C. Kendrick, you may read the initials on the end of his suit-case), I say but for Miss Rodgers, his presence in company with Miss Gilbert at this distance from home would undoubtedly be a scandal; however, let Mrs. Grundy possess her soul in peace, Lorrie and Van are not eloping, and they are sufficiently chaperoned. There is even another trained nurse along, some subordinate of Miss Rodgers's, the stout young woman with the fine complexion—Van Cleve never can remember her name. Mr. Kendrick displays great promptness and efficiency in getting his ladies off the car, in accumulating their belongings, and marooning the party safely upon a reef of luggage out of the crowd and the torrid sunshine, while he starts off to find a conveyance and incidentally whatever information about the town he can pick up. "Say, Jim, git on to Brigham Young in the blue sack-suit!" a lounging khaki-clad gentleman with a toothpick in one corner of his mouth, and 52d Mich. V. I. on the front of his slouch hat observes to another, facetiously noting Van's activities; by good luck, the latter does not hear him.

"They say the train goes on somewhere across the river and backs right up into the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel," says Miss Rodgers, staring about her; "isn't that the limit for you, though? I never heard of a train running around hunting up hotels before. Look, that must be a Cuban! No, I don't mean him—I mean *him*—the one that looks like a mulatto, only he isn't. *That's* what we're fighting for!"

The other nurse remarks in a strain of cheerful fatalism fostered by three days and nights of travel beset with surprises and uncertainties, that you can't tell what you may have to go up against down here; you've just got to take it as it comes. And, "Was your brother going to meet you here, Miss Gilbert?" she asks with interest.

"No. I—I don't even know where he is, you see.

I couldn't send him word. I'll have to look for him," says Lorrie, nervously, plucking at the edge of her veil. The two nurses exchange a glance behind her back. I believe they are not less sympathetic for being devoured with curiosity. They know all about her engagement; trained nurses always know who is Who in Society and What is being done; they study the *Jottings* column as devoutly as the Testament. These two think that Lorrie is as sweet as she can be, and no wonder she's frightened to death about her *feconsay* going off to the army; they have offered freely to bet each other that she's ten times more upset about *him* than about her brother. But what is it that's wrong about the brother, anyhow? They can't make it out, but (again they bet) there's *something* behind it. Wasn't there some talk about his being a dope-fiend, or something? One of them heard it when she was nursing that typhoid case on the North Hill; the Gilberts go with all that swell North Hill crowd, you know. They bet once more that that is the reason Mr. Kendrick came down with them to Tampa; that girl couldn't manage any dope case by herself! The question had agitated them for all these three days; nothing to be got out of Mr. Kendrick; he said he just thought he'd spend his vacation taking a look at the army, but pooh! You couldn't fool them that easy! "I'm glad he's along, anyhow," Miss Rodgers confided to her associate. "I tell you, it certainly is nice sometimes to have a man around to look out for you and kind of *run* you. I've been my own boss so long, I didn't realize how nice it was. And Mr. Kendrick never gets fresh and talky — *you* know — he never gets that way. That's what I like about him."

"Yes, but he's kind of stiff and — and *distant*, more than anybody needs to be," said the stout girl, not without resentment; "do you suppose there's ever been anything between him and Miss Gilbert?"

"Well, if there ever was, he's good and got over it now. You'd think they were married, he pays so little attention to her," said Miss Rodgers, with a half-laugh; and her companion's face cleared.

Lorrie Gilbert will never to her final breath forget these hideous days; sometimes even now, years afterwards, she will live over in dreams the frenzied hurry of her departure, the grief and suspense and, worst of all, the intolerable need of deception that drove and harried her. Paula's secret, Bob's secret, laid them all under its shameful bondage; honorable men and women, they had to sit down together ignobly and concert falsehoods wholesale. All the story must hold together, and they must take care not to contradict one another! She must pretend that she was going as a nurse, and of course, incidentally, to see Bob — oh, yes, she would see Bob! Her father and mother must pretend that they approved of it. Van Cleve (since he *would* insist on accompanying her party) must pretend that he wanted a vacation trip! She could not meet a girl friend, she could not answer the telephone, or write a note without an adjusting of her mask and a renewed conning of her rôle — and there were so many friends to see, and telephone-calls to answer and notes to write when people heard of her project. They made a nightmare about her with their kind admiration and wonder and respect; she listened to her own easy lies with loathing, yet believed with the whole force of her soul that she was doing right. And when she guessed that, in spite of her, there were those, like the two nurses, whose suspicious curiosity was not satisfied, terror possessed her utterly. It was the same with her mother, with her father. I doubt if Paula Jameson ever felt a tenth part so guilty as any one of the upright, blameless people caught in the meshes of her wretched intrigue. Certainly she

did not exhibit much gratitude in return for all their care and worry.

Lorrie had gone to see the girl, finding her silent and strangely self-possessed or self-contained now. She did not complain, and she made no excuses for either herself or Bob; in fact, she would not speak of the young man at all, out of some perverse notion of loyalty or self-sacrifice, Lorrie guessed. "You'll see she won't say right out it was him — you can't make her say it right out," Mrs. Jameson explained to Lorrie in a voluble whisper outside the door. "She just cries if you ask her about him. It took me *hours* to find out who it was the other day. My, I can understand that, can't you? *Any* woman can understand *that*! I believe she's sorry now she told me — or let me find out, rather. But you just go on in and talk to her, anyhow; don't mind the way she acts. She — it's the way she is — she ain't well — and — and she ain't going to be well for a while yet, you know, Miss Gilbert," said Mrs. Jameson, shamefacedly. "I'm going to take her away — I've found a place down in the country. There's a good doctor there, and I can telegraph for a nurse any time. I'll give you the address, in case — but we don't want to bother you or your folks any more than we can help, Miss Gilbert. You've been just as kind as can be. And I know you're going to do everything you can to get your brother back —" her voice failed. It went to Lorrie's heart to see the poor woman so humble and grateful. Mrs. Jameson had aged a lifetime in the last few days; her red hair was twisted up in a loose knot, regardless of its accustomed puffs and braids and carefully set undulations, and of the gray streaks that were beginning to show in it here and there; her corsets were relaxed for the first time in twenty years; she was puzzling over a Butterick pattern with the scissors in one hand and yards of incalculably fine lawn spread upon the bed before her, when Lorrie was



ushered in. "It's queer, the things are so little, but they're just as much trouble to make as if they were big. I used to sew pretty well, too, once," she sighed, looking at Lorrie with wholly maternal eyes.

She kept out of Paula's room, during this visit, with a delicacy nobody would have expected of her; it was better for the two young women to be alone. Lorrie told the other what they were doing; she assured Paula with strong emotion that *everything would be all right*; that Bob would come back to her; that when he realized the wrong that he had done, how foolish and selfish he had been, he would be the most anxious of them all to make it right. "He's not bad — he's not a bad man — and of course he — he cares for you, Paula," said Lorrie, shrinking from the word, even the thought, *love*, in such a connection. Of course Bob and Paula must be in love, after their fashion, the girl had concluded; but she recoiled from what seemed to her the animal ugliness of it. Yet Lorrie was no nun in spirit; she was a warmly living woman who more than once had been conscious of riotous impulses in her own young blood, wakened by a touch, a look; but she could not imagine herself mastered by them. The natural cleanliness and strength of her character were reënforced by all her environment and education. There *were* unfortunate women, and there *were*, undoubtedly, brutes of men; but that they should exist in her own class and caste had been a thing inconceivable hitherto. Try as she would, the sympathy she wanted to feel and show for Paula was forced and unreal, and perhaps the other girl felt it to be so. She sat unresponsive to all Lorrie's feverish earnestness.

"That Mr. Kendrick knows. I don't see why Momma had to let *him* know. I think it was real *dumb* of her," she said sulkily; "she'll go telling somebody else, if she don't look out."

"Why, it just happened so — your mother couldn't

help his knowing — and anyway he's just like a brother to Bob, you know, Paula. He'll never say anything," protested Lorrie, quickly, repelled. Paula's mother was doing the best she could for her, poor thing!

"I don't like him. I don't see why she had to tell it before *him*," Paula repeated, shrugging peevishly; and she let Lorrie kiss her and go away with hardly another word.

It is likely that Van Cleve, who, as he would have frankly owned, cared nothing for the Jameson women, mother or daughter, was as much disturbed over his unfortunate knowledge as Paula herself; he would have been thankful to have been out of the whole miserable business. But being involved against his will, he meant to see it through. What made the situation serious for the young man was the way it affected Lorrie. Van exhausted every argument, he suggested half a dozen other plans, he lost his temper and fumed, to no avail; nothing he could say or do would persuade her out of going on what he considered about as wild and foolhardy a quest as any woman could undertake. He said to himself in despair that she was just like his Aunt Myra for all the world! Reason was not in women. And could anything equal the supreme confidence with which Lorrie and her mother spoke of her ascendancy over Bob! That was all very well; she might be able to manage Bob when she got hold of him, but *first get hold of him!* In what unspeakable state, and in what unspeakable camp, troop-ship, slum of Tampa or Key West, or even Cuba, if she got that far (which Heaven forbid!) might she not find him, after a search among hundreds of men in scores of such places! And when he had painted the prospect in as lively colors as he could muster and announced that she should not go without his protection, Mrs. Gilbert added the last straw to his burden of impatience by looking alarmed and dropping various carefully-

worded hints about impropriety ! "If Lorrie can stand the things she's going to see and hear, alone, in a place full of all kinds of men, she can very well stand one man going down on the same train with her, even if she does unfortunately know him," he said severely ; and Mrs. Gilbert had no answer.

He who had never asked for a rest or favor before had no difficulty in getting this ; Mr. Gebhardt, indeed, dismissed him heartily with many exhortations to have a good time, and burlesque warnings against enlistment. In fact, Van Cleve, heartless as it may seem, did have a fairly good time ; he could not keep Bob's misdoing and the nature of their errand before his mind constantly. He enjoyed the change and bustle and the humors of the road ; and he thought Miss Rodgers and the other nurse, the pudgy one — he *could* not remember her name — were nice women, even if they did ask too many questions. They were quick-witted, jolly, sensible, and refreshingly oblivious of any kind of impropriety in his companionship. Innumerable were the cigars he smoked, the games of cards he took a hand in, the stories he heard and told, in the "smoker" while the train screeched and rattled across the sweltering Southern countryside. At Montgomery he got a cinder in his eye, and Miss — the fat girl, whatever her name was — got it out for him with signal gentleness and dexterity. "The fellow that gets you will be lucky," said Van, and wondered at the way she blushed and giggled ; "I mean gets you for a nurse, you know," he added ; she turned redder still and flounced off, and would hardly speak to him the rest of the day, as he vaguely noticed ; and decided with regret that he must have made himself offensively familiar. As the young women had remarked, he kept himself rather aloof from Lorrie, while doing everything he could think of for her comfort in his awkward way, heaping her seat with magazines and

books and baskets of fruit, opening and shutting windows, fetching and carrying her wraps and bags, eagerly and diffidently kind. Miss Gilbert, I am bound to say, received all of this from him without effusive gratitude, quite coolly and as a matter of course. She was used to Van Cleve, whose attentions always took a practical form; and between her brother and her lover poor Lorrie's mind was too filled with anxiety and unhappy forebodings to spare Van any thought. The young man knew it; he accepted his portion with his habitual iron philosophy. "If she just doesn't kill herself with worry and excitement, that's all I ask!" he thought; and sometimes fell to wondering uneasily and shrinkingly what Lorrie was going to say to Bob when they finally reached him. "Nobody's heard Bob's side yet. He couldn't do anything but deny it, anyhow. It's the girl's word against his—well, I don't know—I don't know—" Van Cleve mused, with his narrow gray eyes drawn up, and the hard line at the side of his mouth showing distinctly—"I feel mighty sorry for that poor mother of hers, anyway!" he always finished.

The town of Tampa is of sufficiently ancient a foundation to have figured in our history a good while before the year '98; and General Shafter's men and his ordnance and his mules and his wagons and everything else that was his, even the transports that lay off Port Tampa, were not by any means the first that this unmartial-looking burg had seen. It knew at first hand all our bloody struggles with the Seminole and other savages of the peninsula; there is, indeed, an old fort or the site of one hereabouts, and many of the streets bear the name of some stout Indian fighter of those old years. Nothing could be less picturesque or more peaceful than its aspect nowadays; and the late military occurrences are well-nigh as completely forgotten as the early ones. Yes, they are forgotten

even by that very large body of residents who, one would think, should remember them best, those whose race we took up arms to benefit, the Cuban gentry whom you may find by the hundreds engaged at rolling tobacco and kindred occupations in the score or more of huge establishments on the outskirts of the city. I doubt if there is one of them who knows any more about General Shafter than he does about General Andrew Jackson; the battle of San Juan Hill means exactly as much to them as the battle of Agincourt; and when, visiting Tampa in the interests of history, I asked one of these patriots (to whom I was referred for information) if he could tell me something about the Santiago campaign or the *reconcentrado* camps, he looked upon me blankly, and at length answered in a brilliant American style that he would prefer something easier in the way of a question. "Ask me something easy!" were his exact words; and also: "Naw, I don't know nothin' about it — see? I wasn't there — betcher life!" says he, with thankful fervor, almost equal to that with which he later accepted a trifling recognition of his services in showing me over the factory. This gentleman appeared to have been perfectly assimilated.

The place was full of an exhilarating noise and color that day when Lorrie reached it; the wide streets, unpaved and ankle-deep in sand, wherein the army-wagons had worn all manner of holes and trenches, were jammed with people; it seemed as if there were flags and groups of white tents at the end of every vista, and bugle-calls sounding every hour; across the river, there were pennants streaming from the minarets of the great hotel; exotic trees and flowers bloomed with fantastic exaggeration in all the dooryards; and a band somewhere in the offing was playing vigorously — "My gal is a high-bo'n lady," it proclaimed in splendid time and tune. Something of the sanguine excitement communicated itself even to Lorrie's troubled

spirit ; and Van Cleve, after he had got them all safely installed in a boarding-house (on Florida Street, a common-looking little frame building which is still there, for I saw it the other day when I was in the town) that had been recommended to Miss Rodgers by some Red Cross authority, had all he could do to persuade the girl to stay there quietly while he himself went out and made inquiry for her brother. "I'll find Bob if he's in Tampa, and I'll bring him to you, Lorrie, but you've got to stay here so I'll know where to find *you*. This is no place for women to be tagging around after a man," he said at last shortly, quite unconscious of the harshness of his manner.

"Yes, Van, I'll — I'll do whatever you say," said Lorrie, meekly. All at once she began to feel unnecessary and troublesome ; and after he had gone, crept off to the cramped, little stuffy boarding-house bedroom, and cried miserably to herself with her face in the pillows. Van meant well, she knew that ; about everything that *mattered*, he was as good and kind as could be, and thoughtful too, but — but Philip would not have spoken to her that way !

## CHAPTER II

### IN WHICH A CERTAIN KIND OF NEWS TRAVELS FAST

THE efficient Mr. Kendrick, starting out to explore Tampa in search of his friend, had no very clear idea where to go or whom to ask, for all his efficiency. Upon applying to the heads of Bob's paper, a measure he had had the forethought to take before leaving home, he had been told that they did not know where the young man was, and furthermore they added with some strong qualifying adjectives that they did not care; as far as the *Record* was concerned, there was one war-correspondent less in Tampa or at the front, the management having dismissed (they said "fired") Gilbert a few days previously!

"Why, wasn't he doing all right?" Van Cleve asked, and was immediately conscious, with a kind of angry sinking of the heart, of the needlessness of the question.

"Doing all right?" repeated the authority whom he addressed — and whether this was the editor-in-chief or some other editor, or what position he occupied, Van, who had never been inside a newspaper-office before, was entirely ignorant; but the other man spoke like one of the powers. "*Doing all right?*" Say, you know Gilbert, don't you? Well, then —!" he made a gesture. "What's the use?"

What was the use, indeed? Van Cleve came away in a very gloomy mood; he had not the courage to tell Lorrie; the family had enough on their minds already, and they would learn this only too soon, anyhow. He felt an unhappy certainty that Robert would not come

home because of being thus deposed ; on the contrary, he was much more likely to stay with the army loafing and drinking till his money gave out, and then getting somebody to stake him until that resource was exhausted, too, after which he might possibly beat his way home, or write for help — thus thought Van Cleve, out of temper and out of heart.

He went out now through the crowds and around to the corner of Tampa and Twiggs streets, where was the home of that journal to whose care Bob's mail had been directed. The place was in a prodigious rush of business, messenger-boys and reporters tearing back and forth, and bulletins tacked up outside about which people were standing three and four deep in the glare of the sun with the thermometer at ninety. There was a little entry with offices on the ground-floor opening off of it on either hand. Van Cleve pushed his way in, and, feeling himself a nuisance, began on the first person he could reach, a shirt-sleeved lad, pounding away on a typewriter in the corner with his collar and tie undone, and the moisture beading off his chin. He did not even look up when Van spoke.

"Gilbert? Ump!" he made a negative motion with his head and at the same time contrived to twitch it in the direction of the other side of the room. "Ask the boss."

The boss was a stout man, chewing the butt of a cold cigar, and dictating to a young woman stenographer, with his foot cocked or braced up on the rung of her chair. He stared and considered. "Gilbert? R. D. Gilbert? No, I don't remember him. How is that, anyhow?" he said to the stenographer vaguely. "Do you know anything about any Gilbert?"

She did not ; and they both eyed Van Cleve with a sort of fatigued hostility, the man gnawing at his cigar, the girl with her hand poised above the writing-pad.

"The man I mean is a war-correspondent for a Cin-



cinnati paper —" Van Cleve began again; "he had his mail —"

"Sa-ay, how many correspondents d'ye think we've had here, son?" said the fat man, in benevolent irony; "one or two? You've got another think coming. Anyway, they're all gone now. They went with Shafter two weeks ago. Don't you get to see the papers in Podunk?"

"I was going to say he had his mail sent here, so I thought possibly you'd know something about him," Van explained. "Don't you have the rural free delivery in Tampa?"

"Oh! Well now, Mr. Soyer attended to that, didn't he, Jennie? I can have somebody look that up, if you'll wait — we're kind of busy —"

It appeared, however, upon inquiry, that Mr. Soyer had gone out to the encampment at Tampa Heights; he had gone down to St. Petersburg; he had gone over to the Hotel to interview somebody; in fine, Mr. Soyer was not to be found. Anyway, the probabilities were that the man the gentleman was looking for was in Cuba — that's where he ought to be if he was on his job. What paper did Van represent?

"I'm not representing any paper. I'm only trying to hunt this fellow up, because he's wanted at his home. Sickness," said Van Cleve, truthfully enough. It had occurred to him that he did not want to be taken for a private detective in search of a criminal — an aspect which the inquiry gave signs of assuming!

"Sickness, eh? Too bad! Because you're not going to have one easy time finding him," said the other, perfunctorily, and resumed his dictation.

Van Cleve walked out again, baffled. He went up to the other newspaper-office. There nobody had ever heard of Bob, either; but they suggested that he go down to Key West and wait until one of the Associated Press boats, which were constantly "on the jump"

between Cuba and the mainland, came in. His friend might be on any one of them. "What regiment was he with? You might trace him that way. Most of them asked to be assigned to some particular regiment, you know," somebody told him. "They were all going and getting permits or credentials, you might call 'em, from the staff officer that had it in charge — Lieutenant Miley, I believe it was."

"All right. Where'll I find Miley? He might know, or have it listed somewhere," said Van, promptly. But the others began to laugh.

"Lord love you, man, Miley's gone to Cuba! Now the thing for you to do is to go on down to Key West, and just scout around for those despatch-boats, like I'm telling you —" they advised him earnestly, with a good-natured interest. Van Cleve gratefully shared the three cigars he happened to have on hand amongst them, and lingered awhile listening and asking questions, and hearing mostly that pleasingly free criticism of war proceedings at which civilians and onlookers are invariably so apt. As he left, they repeated their assurances. "There'll sure be a battle before long; our fellows have landed, you know. And the minute anything happens, the press-boats will be coming in, thick as flies. All you've got to do is to wait —" and so on. He was not aware of having been any more communicative about himself and his business than was necessary, and later received a shock at reading under the caption, "Personals. Arrivals in Tampa," that Mr. and Mrs. Kendrick of Cincinnati, and party were stopping at the Holt House!

Our friend had consumed most of the afternoon in this fruitless business, and now faced homeward or boarding-houseward in a disagreeably puzzled and undecided frame of mind. "Nice time Lorrie would have had down here by herself!" he remarked inwardly; and then reflected with chagrin that her efforts

could scarcely have been more futile and ill-directed than his own. He did not know whether to go to Key West or not; if the discharge had arrived in time, Bob might not have left with the army after all; he might be right here in Tampa; the plain truth was, Bob's whereabouts was a matter of pure guess work. Van found himself exasperated by the inability to take some kind of definite action; never before in the whole of his narrow, resolutely ordered, undeviating career had he hesitated over his course or waited upon another person's pleasure. By and by he fell in with Miss Rodgers and the other nurse who had gone out to discover what they might about their own assignment and were returning in a state of irritation similar to his own.

"It's the worst mix-up you ever saw!" Miss Rodgers complained volubly; "nobody can tell us who the surgeon is, or where he is, that we're to report to. They don't seem to know anything about their own business, so I suppose it's not to be wondered at that they don't know anything about ours. We've asked about forty dozen adjutants and captains and brigadier-generals and quartermasters, and not one of 'em can even give us a steer in the right direction. They keep telling us that the hospital-ship was the *Olivette*, or that Miss Barton has gone to Cuba with *her* ship, and anyway we're too late to be of any use! 'I know all that,' s'd I to the last one; 'if you'd just listen to what I'm telling you a minute,' s'd I, and then I said it all over again. 'I'm going to the military hospital *here* or wherever you need nurses,' and he just looked wild-eyed, and said in that case we'd better see Major Thingummy or Colonel What's his name!"

The stout young woman chimed in: "It made me so tired having 'em say they didn't know where the hospital was, I just said to one: 'Well, for mercy's sake, why don't you get a pain in your toe or a case of

appendicitis and *find out!*' He looked just as *mad* for a minute, and then he kind of laughed."

"Well, it's all very nice to laugh—but I'm here to nurse sick men, I'm not here to chase around tra-la-ing with well ones," said her superior, impatiently. She was a conscientious, hard worker, and had all the professional's contempt for incompetence and waste of energy. "If I couldn't run an army better than this, I'd take a back seat and let somebody do it that could!"

"They're pretty nearly all volunteer troops, you know. The regulars are better managed, I guess," Van reminded her.

"The Lord help 'em if they aren't!" retorted Miss Rodgers, fervently. It gave Van Cleve a queer sense of comfort to hear the two hearty, capable women; and that they should be knocking about the camp among all the crowds and sights and sounds which he had so peremptorily forbade Lorrie's essaying, nowise offended him. Lorrie was different; these nurses could stand anything. For that matter, they themselves expected little or nothing of her. "These society girls—!" the fat little nurse had remarked to Van Cleve privately with a knowing smile; she did not finish, but it was amazing with what a world of tolerance, of patient and good-natured superiority, she charged the three words. Van Cleve understood; he was somewhat surprised to note how confidential Miss—er—no use, he could *not* get her name!—had become with him in the few days of their acquaintance. Seldom, in fact never before, had any girl displayed so much taste for his society. And now, studying his face, she said quickly:—

"You didn't find your friend—Miss Gilbert's brother—you couldn't find him, Mr. Kendrick? I'm so sorry."

"Better luck to-morrow perhaps," said Van, trying

to speak carelessly. As usual, when the name of Miss Gilbert's brother came up, the nurses asked no questions, sending each other a brief, warning glance. Something was wrong about that brother, they *knew* it!

They went back to Lorrie at the Holt House and had their supper, during which meal Van Cleve performed what was for him a prodigy of dissimulation by referring to his bootless search in a casual, off-hand manner with no hint of any difficulties and with a matter-of-course air of expecting success at any moment. And he further gave it as the result of his observations that this war was going to turn out a picayune business after all — a deal of cry and no wool! The Spanish were notoriously much better at running away than fighting; witness their puerile conduct when our boats shelled their forts and coast defences which they invariably abandoned almost without striking a blow; witness Dewey's capture of Manila without the loss of a man; witness the Spanish fleet scuttling into Santiago harbor to hide like a parcel of frightened cats; witness this and witness that! They might do a little bushwhacking perhaps, but stand against the advance of our army? Never! The minute our troops landed, every Spaniard in the neighborhood probably beat it for the tall timber, and left his gun behind — these were Mr. Kendrick's graphic and humorous words. According to him there would be no danger, no wounds, no fever, no anything of any consequence; war was the most delightful occupation of the human race, and he seriously regretted that he had not enlisted so as to see some of the fun. He gave a burlesque rendition of his interviews with the newspaper-men that sent Miss Rodgers and her colleague into fits of laughter and even succeeded in brightening up Lorrie; he made amiable jokes about the eating, which indeed was very poor; he entered into affable converse with the darky waiter at their table; in short, never was there so

light-hearted and care-free a person as he. The nurses were immoderately entertained; they had not known that Mr. Kendrick was so *lively* and *easy* — easy as an old shoe! As for Lorrie, for whose sole benefit Van Cleve was painfully going through this exhibition, the girl ended by being at least half convinced by it, and her spirits rose proportionately. Knowing Van as she did, she could not have believed him equal to so much humane hypocrisy; the young man, when he had time to think, listened to himself with astonishment. “By Jove, I’m doing as well as Uncle Stan! I come by it rightly, I guess!” he thought mirthlessly.

After this they all went together to the Tampa Bay Hotel, upon the motion of that indefatigable entertainer, Van Kendrick, who seemed determined that nobody, including himself perhaps, should be alone for any length of time, or have a moment for thought. “Never mind letters, Lorrie; you haven’t got anything to write about, and you’ll have plenty of time after a while,” he ordered her. “You want to get out and see all this. It’s a very remarkable thing, really, and it won’t happen again in our time. Come along now.” In fact, there was something very exhilarating in the lights and noise and movement, and the curious sense of nearness to all the other people, so many thousands of them. To feel one’s self alone in a crowd is a dreadful experience, but nobody could feel alone in this crowd, not even in the bedecked corridors of the Hotel, which the newspapers said were “thronged with celebrities.” Van Cleve got his party four rocking-chairs around a teakwood stand in a corner encompassed by the bronze jardinières and Chinese cabinets and ormolu mirrors and marble statuary and astounding tapestries and oil-paintings with which the establishment is well known to be profusely furnished; and there they were all sitting when for a final dramatic touch an old acquaintance happened upon them, amongst all the aliens.

This was Mr. J. B. B. Taylor, of all men in the world, and he has since described the meeting with a good deal of interest. "I wasn't much surprised," he says; "you weren't surprised to meet anybody in Tampa those days. The ends of the earth came together there. And then, you know, I'm eternally on the move and running into people, anyhow. Just a minute before I had come across a man I knew, a Japanese, some kind of an *attaché* at their legation in Washington that his government had sent down to follow our army around, I believe — a little Mr. Takuhira — a nice little fellow. He'd been educated over here, and that's how I came to know him, meeting him at the Harvard Society banquets, once in Philadelphia, I remember, and two or three times after that — Chicago, Denver, I can't recall the other places — class of '90 he was, a very pleasant fellow — I think he's back in Japan now, in some big position over there. He knew a great many of the newspaper-men — of course he spoke English perfectly — and they called him Take-your-hair-off! But I was going to tell you about Kendrick. I was standing talking to Takuhira when I caught sight of him; here he was with Miss Gilbert, whom at that time I didn't know at all, and two other ladies that I'd never seen before either, with some lemonades in front of them, listening to the music and watching the crowds and the epaulets and uniforms and all the rest of it, just as if it were the most natural thing in the world for them to be there. Van Cleve looked a good deal older than the last time I saw him, and do you know my first thought was: 'Why, those aren't his own people! I'd know the Van Cleve ladies anywhere, and those aren't any of *them*, and what's become of the Major? Can Van possibly have got married and annexed another family to take care of?' Then he saw me, and got up and spoke right away."

So J. B. was introduced to the assemblage, and Mr.

Takuhira, too ; and if the little Oriental gentleman was confounded at the spectacle of a single young man in company with three single young women voyaging about the country a thousand miles from home, unquestioned, and evidently entirely respectable, he was by far too mannerly to show it. "Take-your-hair-off was used to American ways," J. B. said ; "and of course the Red Cross explained everything, anyhow. You saw dozens of nice girls going around by themselves. I think Van Cleve was glad to see us ; he looked fagged out, and, after we joined them, sat back and let us do the talking as if he wanted a rest. Miss Gilbert and Takuhira got on together wonderfully ; it turned out that they had some mutual friends —, people they both knew, that is — anybody's a friend when you meet away from home — Boston and Washington people, and I believe some army and navy men. The two nurses talked mainly to me ; they looked at Takuhira as if he were some kind of educated chimpanzee, and I'm sure that's how they classed him. That youngest nurse was rather making eyes at Van Cleve, I thought, but he didn't seem to be conscious of it at all ; it was rather funny. He told me he was down on business, and then caught himself, and said : 'That is — well, I'm taking a vacation — I'm making a vacation of it, you know.' I thought he didn't look much like a man taking a vacation, but, of course, it was no affair of mine. Van Cleve has always seemed to me a serious, literal, all-work-and-no-play sort of young chap ; his life has made him that way, I suppose. I asked him about the family, and he said they'd gone to New York just before Christmas, and stayed there all winter, but moved out to the country somewhere in Connecticut when the hot weather came on. They're always moving around, you know."

They sat there talking, J. B. said, until quite late ; and it was after they had all said their good nights,



and the others had been gone some time, and he himself was upstairs in his room getting ready for bed, that on a sudden, a tremendous racket broke out in the streets of the town across the river, quickly spreading to the hotel side, bells ringing, whistles tooting, people running and yelling, and by and by guns or fire-crackers beginning to go off deafeningly. He hustled himself into some clothes again and ran out, meeting in the halls other half-dressed men, none of whom knew what was happening; they were guessing everything from a fire-alarm to Spanish gunboats coming up to shell Port Tampa! Takuhira joined them. "He was the least interested man present, you might have thought," J. B. said afterwards with a laugh; "but, by George, he was the first to suggest that the telegraph-office was the place to inquire! And he added, as calm as Buddha, that 'very possiblee the boats mide have come outt!' He meant Cervera's fleet, of course. It sounded so queer in his precise, grammatical way of talking, and with no more expression on his face than if he had been carved out of old ivory, with jet eyes. All the rest of us gesticulating and shouting like lunatics!"

As they were hurrying over the bridge, they ran into some men and boys who wildly reported that there had been a battle; there had been fighting at Santiago, and our boys had whipped, of course. In the town the streets were full of hurrahing people, and all the bells and sirens were going madly; it was just before the Fourth, so there was a plentiful supply of cannon-crackers and bonfire material besides. J. B. and the Japanese *attaché* made for a newspaper-office; the crowd was so wedged together outside it was impossible to get through, and on the skirts of it they fell in again with Van Cleve Kendrick; Van had taken his ladies to their hotel and was on his way to the cot he had secured in a rooming-house when the excitement began. Nobody seemed to know whence the information came,

but everybody was sure it was correct. Victory! Hurrah! There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night —!

"I suppose it's true?" Van Cleve asked the man next him. "How did they get the news?"

"Why, it was telegraphed from Jacksonville, I believe —"

"*Jacksonville!*" ejaculated J. B. "They could make up pretty nearly any story and send it here from Jacksonville!"

"No, no, it's a wire from Key West," somebody else volunteered. Mr. Takuhira, however, told Van Cleve in his neat English that he understood most of the news was always sent by despatch-boat from Kingston, or by the cable off Cienfuegos which we had picked up after bombarding and destroying the Spanish station there. Presently the crowd in its constant shifting allowed them to press farther in; bulletins were already posted, but the heads and hats were so thick in front of them that only the topmost lines could be seen from the edge of the sidewalk by a tall man like Van Cleve or J. B. Taylor. Those nearest the boards began obligingly to pass back bits of information. The first fight of the land forces had occurred at a place called Las Guasimas; the Rough Riders and Tenth Cavalry (all of them dismounted) had been engaged; they had driven the Spaniards back after a stubborn resistance; it was not possible at the moment of writing to estimate the loss on either side, but the Spaniards' had been the most severe; of the United States troops engaged, the following were known to have been killed:—

"Captain Allen Capron—it says Captain Allen Capron," repeated the man in front of Van Cleve, turning; "d'ye know any of 'em?" he asked parenthetically.

"I know one man," said Van, outwardly calm at least. "Much obliged. Can you read any more?"

"Can't read any. It's this fellow in front of me that's telling me; I can't see a thing. . . . Sergeant Hamilton Fish. Know him?"

Van Cleve shook his head. The man went on: "He says there's a war-correspondent killed — don't see what a war-correspondent was doing up in front on the firing-line, do you?"

Van Cleve heard his own voice saying, "What was that man's name?"

"I didn't catch it — wait a minute. . . . Say, say that over again, will you? Hey? It was a fellow by the name of Marshall. Friend of yours?"

"No," Van said, with almost as much effort as before; he was trembling with relief, and at the same time adjuring himself impatiently not to be a fool; there must be a hundred correspondents in the field besides Bob.

"Here, now you can get in and read 'em for yourself, if you're quick about it," said the other, good-naturedly, squeezing aside, as the crowd swayed open momentarily. Van Cleve edged forward, and the aisle closed up on the instant. The two men immediately in front of him were stooping to read the last items at the bottom of the manila-paper sheet, one of them copying rapidly into a notebook. Van craned over their shoulders. The list of the dead came first. He read: "—— Cortwright, shot through the heart."

## CHAPTER III

### KEY WEST

THE triumphant din went on more or less exuberantly until the small hours of that night at Tampa. The news flashed to the four corners of the country, and thousands read it next morning at their comfortable breakfast-tables, with unbounded martial pride and satisfaction; and numbers of honest, good-tempered citizens who had never quarrelled with a neighbor in their lives, and who sang lustily in church every Sunday great words about Peace and Mercy and Patience and Brotherly Love, gave the children a quarter to buy fire-crackers with which to celebrate, and went out to their fields or factories or offices, telling one another it was just what they had expected and predicted from the start, that our men were the best all-around fighters in the world, invincible in open battle; and as for this guerilla style, why, they could fairly eat the other side up at *that*! That was our natural way of fighting ever since the pioneers went into business against the Indians! And it was a pity about the poor fellows that were killed, but war wasn't any picnic, we all knew that, and so did they when they went into it.

These, too, were the sort of reflections that would undoubtedly have occurred to Van Kendrick, who differed not at all from the average American man, if he had been at his normal occupations, under normal circumstances; and it is conceivable that he would have learned of the other man's death had it been an ordinary one in bed after an ordinary illness, with no

shock nor regret. But as it was, he presented a face of such ghastly consternation to the two gentlemen, his acquaintances, who were still hovering on the edge of the mob when he pushed his way out to them, that they both observed it, even by the artificial light, and exclaimed aloud with concern. Moreover, when Van Cleve told them, they were almost as much shocked as he.

"Good Lord, you say it's the man Miss Gilbert's engaged to? The poor girl! Why, that's — that's a dreadful thing!" J. B. said in horror and compassion. He shook his head solemnly. "It's the women that bear the brunt of it, after all," he said in a lowered voice, thinking of his father who had fallen gallantly at Shiloh, of the grave in the little old Kentucky churchyard, and his mother's face when she went to lay flowers there. "Poor girl! Poor thing! Do you have to go and tell her? Do you think you'd better?"

"It may not be the same man. It is written 'Blangk Cortwright,' I think you said?" the Japanese gentleman pointed out practically.

"Yes, I know — I thought about that. This man's name is Philip, so there's a chance still. There might easily be some other Cortwright in the regiment. But do you suppose there's any way of finding out?" said Van Cleve, in a haggard anxiety. "The uncertainty only makes it worse for her, you know," he added, out of his not inconsiderable experience with womankind.

They all three looked at one another blankly. "All you can do is to wait, I'm afraid," said J. B. at last. As they walked away, a sudden recollection prompted him. "Cortwright? Why, I've met him, haven't I? Oh, yes, I remember perfectly now. I remember hearing about that engagement. I never had —" had any use for that young man, Mr. Taylor was on the point of saying, but checked himself. Cortwright might be dead. The same feeling restrained Van Cleve even from admitting to himself that the fate of Lorrie's lover

was, personally, a matter of entire indifference to him ; he knew that at heart he did not care what became of Cortwright, one way or the other ; but he was desperately sorry for Lorrie. *She* thought Cortwright was a hero, poor girl ! Probably he did not lack the physical courage which is the least and commonest of man's gifts ; and if he had borne himself well and died doing his duty, why, the best of us could achieve no more and make no finer end.

Van Cleve's own endowment did not include anything like tactfulness or capacity for expressing sympathy, — a fact of which he was ruefully conscious ; and he carried this heavy news to Lorrie without the dimmest idea of how to "break it gently," as people say, to her. Van thought — and I am not sure, on the whole, that he was not right — that bluntness might be the best mercy. As it happened, however, she had already heard ; the plump nurse came out of the room with a gravely warning and important carriage, and stopped Van Cleve on the threshold.

"No, she didn't faint, and she hasn't been crying or anything," she whispered in answer to his questions ; "but she gave up right away that it was true. She says she doesn't believe there was another Cortwright. Oh, Mr. Kendrick, isn't it awful ?" she wound up, not without some enjoyment, in spite of her real kindness of heart and desire to help.

"Ask her if she'll see me, will you, Miss — er —" Van said. He was wondering whether to tell Lorrie what he intended to do next ; whether, indeed, she would be in a fit state to hear or consider his plans.

"My name isn't Miss Urr — urr —, Mr. Kendrick, I'm *Miss Crow*," said the nurse, bristling a little and mimicking him roguishly ; "I do believe you've been forgetting it right along. *Miss Crow*, now do try and fix me in your mind."

"All right — that is, I mean, I beg your pardon —

much obliged," said Van Cleve, clumsily, in his preoccupation; at his best, he would have been a mortally unpromising subject for a flirtation, and now he scarcely looked at the young woman, scarcely heard her. "If you'll just ask Miss Gilbert if she minds speaking to me a minute —?"

Lorrie herself came to the door, and stood before the young man with eyes that seemed very large and bright and of soundless depth, in her white face. "Have you found Bob, Van Cleve?" she said quite steadily. "That is what we must do, whatever comes, you know that." Van Cleve felt something bravely self-forgetful in her speech and manner that touched him more than all the tears she could have shed.

He took her hand. "I'm sorry about this — this other thing — this report, Lorrie. But don't forget it may not be he. It may be some other man. I hope to Heaven it is!" he said, and meant the words. It made no difference who and what and how unworthy Cortwright might be, all Van Cleve's dislike and jealousy of him were swept away by an unselfish tenderness to see the woman he loved so stricken.

She looked at him, tensely composed, with a kind of distance in her gaze, as from some far height; it almost frightened Van Cleve, this spectacle which he had never before witnessed, of the essential loneliness of sorrow. "I think it is Phil. I think he is dead," she said.

"Oh, you oughtn't to make up your mind to it that way, Lorrie — it's only a report — they're all the time making mistakes —" Van Cleve began, awkwardly trying to reassure her. Lorrie made a little nervous gesture as of renunciation, with her two shaking hands.

"If it is so, it's for the best — I thought of that last night when I heard — it would be a noble way to die, Van Cleve — it would be the way of his choice —" she said in a pathetic exaltation, before which the young man stood silent and somehow shamed.

Van Cleve, having by dint of persistent inquiry made reasonably sure that Bob had at any rate left Tampa, now planned to go on down to Key West, as he had been repeatedly advised; he had made up his mind to go to Cuba too, if need be, and through the good offices of Mr. Takuhira, who was supplied with credentials or some unknown instruments of power everywhere, and who showed himself very active and useful, the trip might be arranged. The *attaché* himself had received orders from his chiefs to reach the army or fleet before Santiago without delay; everybody was expecting news of a big engagement on land or sea, perhaps both, at any moment. Lorrie must stay in Tampa, Van decided, until she heard from him; the two nurses, who had finally got themselves officially recognized, would look after her, as far as their duties allowed; at least she would not be without a soul she knew in the place. They had ceased to expect her to act the part of volunteer nurse with which she had begun, and Van himself had ceased to play his own. It would have been better never to have attempted that petty farce, he thought; of necessity it would sort ill with the tragedies of these days, and soon or late they must abandon it. Lorrie acquiesced to everything he said; for the time all the spirit had gone out of the girl.

"Do you believe she'll ever get over it?" the younger nurse questioned; and prophesied that Miss Gilbert never would, recalling many instances of broken-hearted spinsters who had remained angelically faithful to an early love to the end of their days. She was in a fever of romantic interest, and felt as if they were "living in one of Marie Corelli's works," as she confided to her senior, adding that she "wouldn't have missed it for anything!"

"Oh, yes, she'll get over it. Person has to, you know," returned Miss Rodgers, who was of an eminently prosaic temperament. "I've seen a raft of widows and



widowers that were all broken up right at first, but mercy me, they all got over it! — except some of the real old widows, that is. The men are generally pretty chipper inside of a year. It's not so awful when you come to think about it. Nobody can keep on grieving right along day in and day out, forever. If they do, you can take it from me, something's the matter with 'em!"

"Well, I think Miss Gilbert's the kind that would be loyal to the grave. I think it's lovely," said the other, with a sigh. She was at hand, accidentally, of course, when Van Cleve came, the next day, to say good-by to Lorrie; and assured him earnestly that they would take good care of Miss Gilbert — "She is the *sweetest* thing! And I hope we'll hear from you soon, Mr. Kendrick," said the girl, wistfully.

"Why, I hope so myself. And I want to thank you very much for everything you're doing — you've been most kind, Miss — er — Miss Sparrow," said Van, warmly, shaking her hand. He was off without another thought of her, as she dismally knew; and I believe they have never met since; when Van Cleve got back to Tampa, Miss Rodgers had been sent down to Egmont Key to the army hospital there, and he had no leisure to look up the other young woman.

So now Mr. Kendrick embarked for Key West, and he did not know how much farther. The vessel on which he and Takuhira secured passage put to sea in the august company of the troop-ship *Niagara*, now known as *Transport No. 16*, with seven hundred men aboard to reënforce Shafter before Santiago. And to Van's surprise, this large body of heroes left their native shores without any patriotic or sentimental to-do whatever, no flags, no salutes, no crowds of weeping women, no band playing "The girl I left behind me," — nothing that even Van Cleve's workaday spirit would have regarded as reasonable and appropriate. A fel-

low-passenger, going down on business connected with furnishing canned corned-beef to the government, enlightened him. "The good-by-sweetheart business is about played-out," he explained. "You see when the order first came for the army to start, everybody went piling down to Port Tampa and gave the boys the biggest send-off they knew how. Well then, the last of the transports had hardly got past the bell-buoys when here came an order for 'em to come back home! Day or so after that, they tried it again. That time they only got about three hundred yards down the bay — same old song-and-dance! They just settled right down where they were and waited. It was two or three days after that, I think, before they finally did get off. Looked like starting and stopping was a kind of habit with 'em — 'Farewell forever — forever farewell!' as the song says. Only people get tired farewelling, you know; they can't keep it up that long. Once is enough; it don't seem to have any point the second time. You can't get a rise out of anybody nowadays."

It was a fact that Van Cleve himself began to feel, as it were, callous to further excitement; he had had enough of the alarums and excursions, the sight of fighting-men and armaments. *Transport No. 16*, which had no time to spare, shortly left them behind, but the waters were full of other shipping, which Van barely noticed. There were moments when the whole adventure seemed to the young man's naturally slow and cool judgment absolutely insane. What was he, Van Cleve Kendrick, doing in this outlandish environment? Why, he was going a-knight-erranting, to be sure — knight-erranting at the end of the nineteenth century, on a little steamer with a ridiculous comic-opera name, crowded with men, tumbling about under the red-hot sky, with the gulls squeaking in their rear, and the low coasts of Florida simmering there ten miles off! And

here, for a final incongruity, was a polite Oriental (in a straw hat and beautifully polished shoes !) at his elbow proffering him a cigar ! He took the cigar ; he smoked and talked with the other men sitting in the narrow shade of the deck-house with their feet propped on the extra chairs. He might have been travelling down to see about tobacco contracts or canned corned-beef for the army like the rest of them, for all the excitement he showed or, indeed, felt ; the commonplace attitude of his mind sometimes puzzled him. Once he overheard one of the commercial gentlemen attempting to beguile Mr. Takuhira, in whom he probably fancied he discerned the well-known simplicity of foreigners, with a garbled version of M. Jules Verne's "Trip to the Moon," the scene of which is laid in Tampa, and which the narrator solemnly averred to be true. . . . "They sank a whale of a great big gun straight down into the ground so as to aim square up at the moon. And then they had a regular shell made, only hollow and big enough inside to hold the three men, and they fitted it all up with beds, and stuff to eat and drink, of course, and they all got in there, and had a tremendous charge of dynamite or something put in the gun, and got somebody outside to touch her off with an electric wire, and started up towards the moon, same as you would fire off any shell. Fact ! Why, they show you the place where the gun was, right outside the city ; it's a regulation trip for sightseers. I'm surprised you didn't take that in while you were there —"

"He isn't taking it in now," said Van Cleve, in his unpleasant voice.

"I have read thee story — in French which I read. It is a very good story. You tell it very ouell, sir," said Takuhira, who had listened with the utmost civil interest ; and for some reason the other rose up with a violently flushed countenance and walked away in a hurry, followed by a short bark of laughter from Mr.

Kendrick, who enjoyed the defeat much more than the victor himself, not a muscle of whose ivory-brown face had moved. Van liked the little Japanese. He himself remembered the trip-to-the-moon story; it was one of the books he had read with Bob Gilbert that summer at Put-in-Bay ten years ago. He thought of the two boys with a brief sigh; look at Bob now. Well, look at Bob, and what of it? Doubts thrust themselves upon his mind, as they had more than once before; and again he tried to realize the present, and his task.

Twenty-four hours brought them to Key West, on a hot, noisy morning; and in the paper Van Cleve bought on the dock he found a final report of the fight at Las Guasimas, much enlarged, with a complete and verified list of killed and wounded. Among the former, "Troop X, Lieut. Philip Cortwright" appeared half-way down the page. So poor Lorrie was right in her sad presentiment; and she too must have seen this last despatch by now. Van read the account of the battle. It did not seem to have been very spectacular; no charging up to breastworks, or hand-to-hand struggle. Our advance had been through a practically pathless jungle; the Spanish used smokeless powder so that it was almost impossible to locate them — this statement was repeated continually with a child-like surprise and indignation; also their sharpshooting was very good; they had men posted in the trees; it had been no such slight skirmish as at first reported. The United States troops had behaved with the greatest firmness and daring, as indeed the tale of losses showed; owing to the scattering nature of the fighting, it was not until after some time and search that it had been possible to get an accurate list of the casualties. Lieutenant Cortwright had pressed forward very eagerly and was one of the first to fall with a bullet through the lungs (not the heart as previously stated); he died while being carried to the rear. Mr.

Marshall, the correspondent, had not been killed, but so severely wounded that his recovery was improbable. In another column was the statement that all the bodies found had been buried on the field and could not be removed until after the close of the war — if even then. The graves were marked, and whatever small possessions of the dead men seemed worth while, had been taken charge of, in most cases, by some friend or "bunkie." "Poor Lorrie!" said Van to himself again. And, "This is a strange trick of Fate!" he thought, not without some bitterness in his wonder; "if Cortwright had lived and they had been married, it's ten to one he'd have made her miserable. Here he's died decently and like a man, and Lorrie will revere his memory for a hero and a martyr to the end of her days!"

If Tampa had been in a seething hubbub, it was nothing to Key West, which felt itself in all but hallooing distance of the seat of war, and, in the mediæval phrase, stood within the Spanish danger; the little town of foreign-looking houses and brilliant tropical shrubbery among which one might recognize many old friends of the conservatory uncannily grown and naturalized, was incredibly crowded; the hot white streets swarmed with people; the harbor was jammed with shipping; the quays in a roaring turmoil. Somebody pointed out to Van Cleve the Spanish prizes anchored here and there, a piebald collection of steam and sailing vessels, and told him they were to be auctioned off at public outcry that very morning. "Some of 'em ought to go cheap, by their looks," said Van, and the other man laughed. In truth, they were a dirty and down-at-heel set. The transport had touched five hours earlier, and gone on without delay; another big liner now in the government hire was just standing out to sea, loaded with supplies and the army mail, as Van was informed. Every one was eager to talk and answer all his questions, the young fellow found;

there was the same extraordinary feeling of kinship and ready-made acquaintance in the crowds which he had noticed in Tampa.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Takuhira had entered upon what promised to be a difficult and complicated negotiation with the authorities over his passage to Cuba, which it appeared even the accredited representative of a foreign power could not accomplish without the consent or connivance of every official in the place, and a truly bewildering display of red tape. Van Cleve left him at the beginning of it, and took his own way to the office of the *Key West Sentinel*; he could think of no better starting-point for his haphazard search, and here, for once, Chance befriended him.

The *Sentinel* was housed and served in much the same style as the Tampa newspapers; it might have been the same flimsy wooden building, the same cluttered little office-room, opening full on the street, with a white awning over the door, and a manila-paper broadside with "LATEST NEWS FROM THE SEAT OF WAR," skewered on the lamp-post opposite. The same crowd jostled in and out; the same men chewing unlighted cigars, perspiring in shirt-sleeves with handkerchiefs tucked inside their collars, hammered on the typewriters, or dictated to other hammerers. As Van had more than half expected, nobody knew anything about a Robert Gilbert, or had ever heard of him, or had any time to listen to or answer questions about war-correspondents. He was turning away when there came in a thin, slow-moving man dressed in soiled white ducks, with a thin, yellow, scrubby-bearded and inexpressibly tired face, who took off his hat and wiped his forehead with a languid gesture, as he leaned against one of the tables, and asked if there was any mail for him. Van Cleve, who could not get by in the higgledy-piggledy little place without dislodging him, hesitated an instant, wondering with that slight inward recoil

which most people would have felt at this date if the other might not be just coming out of an attack of the fever; he had plainly been very sick recently — was sick still, for that matter. The typewriter-girl recognized him, and got up to search a pigeonhole in the desk alongside her. "You don't look very good yet, Mr. Schreiber," she said kindly; "I don't believe you ought to be out in the sun. It brings it on again sometimes."

"Oh, I've had my dose," said the visitor, with a kind of haggard jauntiness; he was a young fellow, about Van's own age. "Anyway, you might as well be good and sick as half up and half down this way. It's more interesting. Isn't that mine?"

She handed him a yellow envelope with *Gulf States Monthly* printed in the corner of it, remarking amiably, "Say, that's a dandy good magazine. I buy a number every now and then — only ten cents, you know, and I can't see but what it's got every bit as good stuff in as *Century* or any of the high-up ones. Are you going to have something in pretty soon?"

"I sent 'em an article and some photographs just before I was taken sick — don't know when they'll be out, of course, but I shouldn't wonder if it was in the next issue. They want all their war news to be right up to the minute," he said not without some importance; and added in a slightly lowered and confidential tone; "want a news item? For the society column?"

"Sure we do. Always. What is it?"

"Well then," said the convalescent, unsmiling, with ironic impressiveness, "you may just say that I leave for Cuba to-night or early to-morrow morning on my private yacht, the *Milton D. Bowers*, which is now coaling up and laying in a store of provisions, wines, etc., my special extra dry champagne, and my own brand of cigars, at Wharf 8, foot of Cadoodle Street, or whatever the name of it is, down here three squares to the

right, I mean. Now don't make any mistake; I don't want to have that telegraphed all over the country with my name spelled wrong. I'd nevah be able to show my face in Newport or Tuxedo again, don't you know, they'd all make so much fun of me. Beastly bore, don't you know!"

The stenographer did not laugh, however. "Oh, my, Mr. Schreiber, you ain't honestly going, are you?" she said with concern. "Why, you ain't near well enough yet. I think that's awful reckless."

Van Cleve did not hear her remonstrances; he was busy trying to remember where he had heard before of the *Milton D. Bowers*; it must be the same vessel, for no two that ever sailed the seas would have been christened with such a name. Suddenly he recollected. He spoke to the other young man abruptly. "I beg pardon, are you one of the war-correspondents?"

At this unexpected attack, the stenographer jumped with a little scream; Mr. Schreiber faced about with his fatigued movements, bracing himself by the desk, and eyed Van Cleve inquiringly, a species of jocular hostility or wariness showing on his fever-stricken, youthful face.

"Yes, I'm a correspondent. Aren't you the speedy little guesser, though!" he said lightly, still with an indescribable air of being on his guard.

"I heard you mention the *Milton D. Bowers*. That's one of the newspaper-boats, isn't it?" Van pursued.

"Yes." And before Van Cleve could open his mouth for his next question, the other stuck out a hand and, grabbing Van's, pumped it up and down with exaggerated warmth, exclaiming: "WHY, if it isn't my dear old friend Chauncey Pipp from Hayville, Michigan! Howdo, Chauncey? How's the folks?"

It took Van Cleve a moment or two to perceive what this fantastic performance implied. When he did, he frowned. "Oh, come off! Do I look like a green goods



man?" he said impatiently. "I just want to ask you something. I'm looking for a man that's been on that boat — a correspondent, you understand. I thought you might have met. His name's Gilbert — R. D. Gilbert."

Mr. Schreiber became another man on the instant; he relinquished Van Cleve's hand, entirely business-like and serious. "Why, yes, I know a Gilbert. We were on a cruise together on the *Milton D.* We got to knowing each other very well," he said, interested; "I don't know what his first name was, though; I never happened to ask him. What's your Gilbert like? Tall, light-haired fellow? This one was reporting for a Cleveland paper, I think."

"No, Cincinnati. My man is from Cincinnati."

"Well, maybe it was Cincinnati — I don't recollect — it was Ohio, anyhow. You say you're looking for him?"

"Yes. It must be the same man. He —" Van Cleve stopped himself, glancing at the stenographer, who was an open-eyed spectator. "Here, let's go outside and talk. We're in the way here," he suggested.

"Well, I call that a funny coincidence!" the young lady ejaculated as they left.

Outside, in chairs under another awning in front of the saloon across the way, Schreiber said, "You aren't a brother of Gilbert's, are you?"

"No, just a friend of his and the family's. The man I mean is a heavy drinker. You'd know it even if he kept sober while he was down here," said Van Cleve, bluntly. "I didn't want to talk about it before that girl. You saw that."

"Yes, that's the same Gilbert," Schreiber said at once; "he's all right, if it wasn't for that. Good fellow, if it wasn't for that. Just can't let it alone, that's all. I don't mind a man taking a drink once in a while — *Here* now, don't do that, that wasn't a hint; I couldn't

take anything but mineral water, anyhow — I say I don't mind a man taking a drink once in a while, but Gilbert — !” he made a gesture — “he just can't let it alone. Were you expecting to meet him here?”

Van Cleve explained. “I've been looking for him for a week. His paper has let him go, and the family want him to come home. They don't know where he is, nor what's happening to him.”

The newspaper-man nodded with full comprehension of what these statements left unsaid. “Well — all right, apollinaris — I'm afraid you're going to have a hard time finding him because the last I knew he was going to Cuba. I had it all fixed to go myself, only I came down with this blankety-blanked fever instead !”

“Yellow ?”

“No, it's what they call calenture. It's nothing like so serious as yellow, but you certainly do feel rotten after it. What day of the month is it, do you know? I've lost count — one day's so much like another when you're sick.”

Van Cleve himself had forgotten, and was obliged to refer to the *Sentinel*, which he was still carrying in his pocket. It was the 30th of June. “Three weeks since I began to feel so bum I had to go to bed ! The army left the next day,” said Schreiber, dolefully. “However — !” He shrugged away his disappointment with one shoulder. “We've all got to take what's coming to us. I will now proceed to drown my woes in *drink* !” he announced, reverting to his attitude of defiant levity, and took up the mild tumbler of mineral water with a flourish. “Here's your good health, Mr. — ?”

“Kendrick — my name's Kendrick.” Van Cleve got out a card and gave it to him, with a word of half-humorous apology. “I suppose you're used to a lot of wild-eyed cranks butting in on you the way I did,

though. Isn't that so? Newspaper-men have the name of being ready for almost anything."

"Well, I don't call it particularly the act of a wild-eyed crank to take me out and buy me a drink," said the other, good-naturedly. He looked at the card and read aloud: "*Mr. Van Cleve Kendrick*," and repeated his toast: "Here's looking towards you, Mr. Kendrick. I haven't got any cards with me, or I'd exchange with you. My name's Schreiber, however — if you'll take my word for it — and I'm here for the *Gulf States Magazine* partly, and partly on my own. If there's anything I can do for you, I'd be glad to."

Van said that he was much obliged; and they finished one his apollinaris, the other his Baccardi rum in extraordinary amity. It was a great place and time for these hit-or-miss fellowships.

"Funny you should happen to ask me about Gilbert," the correspondent commented; "— no, thanks, I can't smoke yet. Oh, wait till you have calenture — you'll understand! — I say it's funny you should have picked out *me* to ask about Gilbert, because I'm probably the one, single, solitary man in the whole place that could tell you!"

Van Cleve explained about the *Milton D. Bowers*. "If I hadn't heard you say that, I'd have gone on without speaking. But I just happened to remember Bob — Gilbert, you know — mentioning that as the name of the despatch-boat he'd been on, in one of his letters home. It's an absurd sort of name and stuck in my head on that account, no doubt."

"It is a queer name, I suppose," said Schreiber, reflectively; "I don't know why, I never noticed that it was queer before. Yes, Gilbert and I were on the *Milton D.* together. It was an interesting cruise. She isn't a despatch-boat, however; the despatch-boats have these big, high-powered engines, and they get over the ground, or the sea rather, like an express-

train. The *Milton D.*'s nothing but a sea-going tug — kind of a little bull-tug, you know, very stout and strong, but not at all fast. She could get along well enough to keep up with the transports, and that's all that's necessary."

"Is that so? How long were you on that trip?"

"Why, a week or more. We went down by the Isle of Pines, keeping out a good way from Havana on account of the fleet, you know. And then we came around by the east end of Cuba. We must have been very near where the army landed the other day. It's a wonderful coast, tall cliffs right to the edge of the sea, no beach at all, and a whacking big surf piling up all around the bases of 'em. The mountains are all over thick woods, and every now and then you can see a little white streak of a waterfall tottering out like a ghost between them. The sea's almost always very blue, and the surf's white, and the mountains deep green — George!" he shook his head in admiration; "it's beautiful, only it doesn't look real, somehow. It makes you think of a drop-curtain."

"Must have been a great sight," said Van Cleve, with full appreciation. "I didn't think you'd have time to look at scenery, on account of dodging Spanish gunboats and so on."

Schreiber laughed. "Spanish gunboats never bothered us. We had to keep on the hop to dodge our own. They'd have eaten us up in a minute." And seeing the incredulity on Van's face, he added with emphasis: "Yes, they would. The fleet's not a very safe neighborhood for little *Milton D. Bowerses*, or any other non-combatants. They don't know who you are, and they can't risk stopping to find out. Shoot first and explain afterwards — that's their motto! Those big warships just loaf around the ocean all night long without a sound or a light, and if they run across you — Bing! Dead bird! They have to, you

know. You might be a torpedo-boat sneaking up on 'em."

Van Cleve pondered this information with a certain stirring of the adventurous longings he had had in boyhood, and had thought long since dead and buried. What St. Louis soap-factory, what distillery, what office-stool and desk, might be their tombstone! With something of an effort, he got back to the business of the hour.

"You say you think Gilbert went to Cuba when the troops did?"

"Oh, yes, positive. They all went. Everybody went but me."

"How did they get there — the newspaper-men, I mean? Did they have their own boat?"

"Well, yes, some of them. Some were on the Associated Press boats, the *Goldenrod* and the *Wanda* and the others — you've probably seen their names in the papers. There were a good many on one of the transports. You can get to Cuba any old way; it's easier than going from here to New York! I was to have been on the *Milton D.*, but of course that all had to be put off. They took the route by the north coast, and the *Milton D.* could do that nicely. It's shorter, and doesn't take so much coal. Coal's a very serious item with these little tin tea-pots."

Van Cleve surveyed him thoughtfully. "Were you in earnest just now when you were talking about going to-night?"

The other nodded. "Of course I was in earnest — of course I'm going. What made you ask?"

"Why, you're too sick still, aren't you?"

"Oh, sick — thunder!" said Schreiber, in genuine irritation. "No, I'm not sick any more. I'll be all right in a day or two, anyhow. Besides, I can't stay loafing here. There's something doing every minute over there, and I don't want to miss any more of it."

The war isn't going to last forever, you know — a few months, or a year maybe, and we may never have another, not in our time, anyway. If you knew anything about the newspaper game, you'd know a person can't worry around over every little pain and ache, when he might be out getting a good story."

He spoke with a vehemence for which Van Cleve, who was not given to vehemence or excitement himself, rather warmed to him; Van thought it might be foolish and exaggerated, but it showed at least the proper spirit with which any man ought to regard his work. "If everybody felt that way about their job, there'd be a good deal more done, Mr. Schreiber," he said; "the reason I asked you, though, was that I was wondering if I could make an arrangement to go with you. Would there be room on the *Milton D. Bowers* for one more?"

Schreiber stared. "You want to go to Cuba? Why, look here, are you in the newspaper business after all?" he asked ingenuously.

"No, I just thought I'd like to go if I got the chance. I'd like to see it. If we should happen to run across Gilbert, I'd get him to come back with me," said Van Cleve, in as casual a manner as he could put on; it was not well done, for he had no talent for that sort of deception, but Schreiber noticed nothing.

## CHAPTER IV

### ONCE ABOARD THE LUGGER!

THE correspondent's full name was Herman Schreiber, and he came originally from Blucher, Illinois, as he informed Van Cleve in the course of the negotiations, adding with extreme seriousness that he was of Irish descent. Although he knew nothing of Mr. Kendrick's character and antecedents, he made no difficulty about accepting him for a companion on the voyage. It is a long way from Blucher, Illinois, to the coast of Bohemia, and very likely on that journey and since dwelling in the last-named locality, Herman had fallen in with much queerer and more questionable associates. "Why, if you want to go, I'm sure it's all right as far as *I'm* concerned," he said with genial indifference. "You'll have to speak to Captain Bowers, but I don't believe he'll object, provided you can rustle the price. He's a Yankee; comes from New Bedford, or Gloucester, or somewhere down east, and he's about as mellow as a salt cod. Of course, it'll be rough; you don't need to be told that. But if you don't mind sleeping with a lump of coal in your ear, and eating hardtack and canned stuff, and going without a shave or clean clothes for a while, why, it's a good deal of fun. The thing is, you *see it all*, you know. That's the thing, you *see it all*!"

He went back to the hotel — Key West has, or had at that date, but one — with Van Cleve, and there the first person they encountered was Mr. Takuhira, whom the journalist already knew, and saluted as Take-your-hair-off, in a cheerfully informal style. Takuhira's

own prospects, as he told them with his equable smile, were very dubious. "I should have gone by thee mail-boat that left this morning. Arrangements had been made, they say," he said and permitted himself a slight shrug. "Unfortunately they omitted one rather desirable arrangement, that is, to tell me. I did not know anything about it. And now nobody knows anything about *me*. The government of Uncle Sam has troubles of his own, as you say, without to bother about one Japan *attaché*."

"D'ye *have* to get there?" said Schreiber. The Oriental gentleman shrugged again. The other two men could not help exchanging a glance, each one wondering and knowing that the other was wondering whether this Japanese would not be quite capable of committing *harakiri* to satisfy his fanatical Eastern standards of honor, if he failed in his mission. Almost simultaneously they proposed to him their own vessel as a way out of his difficulties.

"And he won't be the funniest traveller the old tub's carried, either," Schreiber said, after they had, all three, completed the bargain with Captain Bowers, who had been willing enough to take Van Cleve, but inquired a little austere why it was necessary to ship the chink? He was won over, however, by an argument which Schreiber assured the others in private was always irresistible with him; give Captain Bowers enough (he said) and he'd sail his namesake to a very much warmer place than Cuba — which Mr. Schreiber specified. And he hinted at a sinister past, and at various desperate exploits of the captain's in the way of blockade-running during the Civil War, filibustering in the Caribbean, and so on, which Van Cleve inwardly decided to discount a trifle. Captain Bowers was a lean, leathery, hard-featured man upwards of sixty, who, indeed, looked quite capable of the dark deeds attributed to him; at some stage of his career, he had lost



two fingers off his right hand, which, some way or other, strengthened the grim impression. But Van was shrewd enough to know that to the landsman the sea and those who follow it will always be a mystery attractive and forbidding in the same breath; pirate or preacher, the captain would probably have looked the same to *him*, he thought, with a laugh; and what difference did it make, anyhow?

Their craft, Captain Bowers announced, would sail at midnight, a choice of hours which, of itself, savored of deep-sea secrecy and danger, but which, Van Cleve vaguely supposed, had something to do with the tide. It left them all the rest of the day for preparation, but somehow Van never can remember nowadays exactly how he spent that time. He wrote to his Aunt Myra and to the bank, and a long letter to Lorrie. Takuhira was writing, too, on the other side of the desk in the hotel lounging-room, filling page after page with Japanese characters, with what might be called an unnaturally natural rapidity, as facile as Van himself. The latter wondered whether their letters might not be a good deal alike. There they sat, each one a parcel of memories and associations as different as possible, yet doubtless fundamentally the same. Some slant-eyed little lady in a sash might be Takuhira's Lorrie; and instead of Van's great, muddy river, and bricked, noisy, sooty, well-loved town, the Japanese must be calling up some fantastic vista of bamboos, cock-roofed temples, and rice-fields, and naming it, with as strong a feeling, home.

Afterwards, to the best of Van's recollection, they went together and got some express checks cashed, and visited a shop where they bought apparel which they dimly conjectured to be suitable for the trip—flannel shirts, canvas shoes, a blanket apiece—they had no idea what they would need. The little Japanese in a sou'wester and jersey, with a bandanna knotted

around his neck, cowboy fashion, was a sight for gods and men, but it must be said to Van's credit that he refrained from laughter. He felt too much of a clown in his own sea-farer's haberdashery. One of the last things he remembers doing was going with Schreiber to buy a revolver which the newspaper-man insisted upon as an indispensable part of his outfit. "Got to have a gun," he said seriously. "It's war times where you're going, you know. Even if you only needed it once, you'd need it mighty bad."

"Well, but I never handled one of 'em in my life — I don't know which end they go off at," Van Cleve objected. "I'm not going to mix into any fight, anyhow — not if travelling's good in the opposite direction, I know *that*."

"Makes no difference. You've got to put up a good, strong bluff just the same," said his new friend sententiously. Van had to yield at length.

"All right," he said, gingerly stowing the weapon in his hip-pocket; "this is where it's considered good form to carry it, I suppose? You'll change your mind about my needing it after I've blown your ear off, or plugged a hole in the boiler. Come on, fellows." They went down to the pier.

As the compiler of these records knows next to nothing of the sea, and as it has always been difficult to get anything out of Van Cleve Kendrick about this experience, it is plain that we cannot be going to enter upon any thrilling nautical adventures. I could not invent them, and Van never will admit that there were any. It seems that nothing of much moment happened during the first part of the voyage, at least; their tug was not a rapid traveller, and she labored along prosaically off the northern coasts of Cuba, which were sometimes in sight at a prudent distance for fully forty-eight hours, day and night, without storms or warships or sensa-

tional encounters of any kind. The population of the *Milton D. Bowers*, meanwhile, crew and passengers alike, lived at inconceivably close quarters in democratic freedom and astonishing harmony, and with a disregard of dirt, discomfort, and inconvenience which any lady who reads these lines would have looked upon with shuddering horror. What would Van Cleve's aunt, what would any of his female relatives have said to the more than dubious bunk and the species of dog-house wherein he slept of a night, to the greasy bench amidships at which he sat down to meals, to the terrific tea and coffee and ships' biscuit and canned tomatoes and sizzling fried onions which he consumed (with thorough relish!) out of tin plates and mugs and unspeakable skillets? What would they have thought of his shipmates, than whom no stranger company were ever assembled on a boat since Noah went aboard the Ark? Van Cleve himself got along admirably with them. "They were all right. They were just *man*, you know, just plain *man*," he once rather obscurely said, in an effort to describe them; the astute tolerance of the phrase better describes himself. There was only one of them whom Van felt he never would understand, and that was Takuhira, between whom and these American men there would forever hang the impalpable veil of race and of habits of mind unconquerably alien. "You can't get on the inside of him, somehow; you can't think his thoughts. It wouldn't make any difference how long you were with him, you'd never *know* him," Van Cleve remarked to Schreiber one day.

The reporter stared. "What! Little Take-your-hair-off? Why, he's easy enough to know. Why, *I've* never had any trouble knowing him," he declared; "he's just as white as any man I ever met if he is a Jap."

"I didn't mean anything against him," said Van Cleve.

And, seeing that it would be impossible to make Schreiber comprehend what he did mean, he gave up the subject. He had observed Schreiber's character, at least, to some purpose. In fact, the newspaper-man afforded a curious and entertaining study. He had been at his work of journalism for some years, after having successively tried and abandoned stenography, elocution, commercial travelling (with a line of notions for a dry-goods concern, he said), clerking in the post-office, and zinc-mining at Joplin. As preparation for the career of letters, he had had the ordinary common-school education, from which he had evidently profited hardly at all in comparison with the extraordinarily wide and also ridiculously narrow schooling he later received from the world at large. Writing was his profession, yet he was no more capable of a page of good English than of a page of Choctaw; but what he wrote commanded a price, and was sufficiently readable. On all the large political and economic and social questions of the day, he had not an idea in his head; but he knew the names of the "bosses" and of the members of the "machine" and what they did and wanted, in twenty cities, Van Cleve's own among them, and had been going to conventions and listening to speeches and interviewing eminent "statesmen" (as he called them) for years. He was a perfectly upright man, yet he would sacrifice or distort beyond recognition any fact to make a "good story," a trait of his which Van had been quick to discover. "Get out and get news. If you can't get it, make it!" Schreiber enthusiastically quoted to him as one of the imperishable maxims of an editorial celebrity under whom he had worked; he was eternally quoting this authority. And with all his cheap standards, his bondage to catchwords, his jingo patriotism, he displayed not a few of the qualities which we associate with very high and strong characters, among them a devotion to his duty of "getting out and getting

news" — or making it — which touched the heroic. Barely recovered from a dangerous and wearing illness, he undertook these not inconsiderable hardships for the sake of his magazine, single-mindedly, as if there were no other course to pursue; he was distressingly seasick, he could scarcely eat or sleep, the fever came back upon him intermittently, he suffered tortures from sunburn, — and he bore it all without a murmur.

Van Cleve, for his part, had never felt better; and, moreover, turned out a good sailor and acceptable ship-mate, lending a hand to the management of the vessel when extra strength was needed, and frankly interested in all her workings and in the crew, whom he found to be not in the least like the sailormen about whom he had read. They were neither so profane nor so simple nor so blackguardly nor so sublimely honest as the pages of Captain Marryat and Mr. Clark Russell had led him to expect. The engineer had been first a motorman in Chicago, then shipped for a couple of seasons — so he told Van — on a Duluth freighter, then drifted to New York, and worked for a while on the Staten Island boats, etc., etc. His helper was some sort of half-breed Cuban. The cook hailed from somewhere in Connecticut, he said; and he also said that he had once cooked in a Maine-moose-camp for Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. Van thought he might possibly be telling the truth, although he was not wholly reliable, either with the cook-stove or the whiskey-bottle. "In every sea-story I ever read the cook was a Lascar," Van Cleve said to him one day; "I feel as if you ought to be, by rights."

"Well, I ain't. I'm Connecticut from the ground up — never was farther west than Milwaukee in my life," retorted the other. "Though I did think some of going to the Klondike last year when the rush was on," he added, pensively turning the bacon. "But I ain't Alasker, not me."

Captain Bowers, who was standing near, smiled grimly. He afterwards told Van Cleve that he had seen Lascars — “plenty of ’em, in the China Seas, and ’round the Straits. They wa’n’t doing any cooking, though,” he said, gazing off to the horizon reminiscently. Van longed to ask what they were doing. Boarding his ship with cutlasses between their teeth, in some onslaught of demoniac pirate junks? Whatever the captain’s experiences in that line, he had no tales to tell about them; he was a taciturn man. His taciturnity even extended to their chief recreation on board the *Milton D. Bowers*, a game of cards, which, whenever the skipper took a hand, invariably had to be whist. Unfortunately the ace of spades went over the side in a light blow the morning of the second day out, and thereafter they were obliged to play euchre and call the deuce the ace, which was awkward but effective. They had only the one pack, and that of an incredible age and stickiness, so that the operations of shuffling and dealing required even more than the usual skill; and to see Captain Bowers do it, with two fingers gone, was a marvel from which Van Cleve, in spite of manners, could not keep his eyes.

The next day was Sunday, a fact which would have escaped Van’s notice had it not been for certain Sabbath-day observances on board; the engineer’s helper washed his shirt; and Captain Bowers shaved in front of six inches of looking-glass tacked up in the cabin, balancing himself nicely to the roll of the boat, and wielding the razor with the same uncanny dexterity, between his thumb and two remaining fingers. Van examined doubtfully his own reflection in the mirror, with a grimy growth of beard and a complexion somewhat the hue of the inside of an old boot-leg, wherein his small, light gray eyes looked oddly out of place, and came to the conclusion that a shave could improve his looks so little, it was not worth the risk. For al-

though it was almost a flat calm, the *Milton D. Bowers*, as she slowly progressed, developed an extraordinary sidelong rocking-horse motion of her own, which would have affected any hand less steady than her captain's. Already in the early morning it was beginning to be unbelievably hot; the horizon, where no land was just now visible and not another sail or smokestack, swam in a glare of sea and sky intolerable to the vision. "We're good and tropical now," Schreiber said, rearing painfully up from his favorite recumbent posture along the decks, to look at it. "We ought to make Baiquiri by to-night, isn't that so, Captain?"

"'Tain't Baiquiri, it's *Daiquiri*," said Bowers, over his shoulder, as he walked forward. "Yes, I guess so, if we have luck."

"Is that where we land?" Van Cleve asked.

"That's where the army landed," said the captain, non-committally. Van felt startled at the sudden nearness of the journey's end.

However, man proposes! It was only a short while after this conversation that the engines of the *Milton D. Bowers*, to the surprise and consternation of her passengers, began perceptibly to lag; they slowed down; they ceased utterly! A great powwowing arose between the engineer and his assistant; Captain Bowers took a hand; the engineer disappeared into the bowels of his machine, and erelong boiler-factory hammerings and clinkings resounded. Van Cleve and the *attaché*, after offering their help, thought it best to keep out of the way, and refrain from annoying questions; but Schreiber had no such scruples. He made repeated trips to the seat of trouble and at last brought back the doleful information that they were going to be held up for the Lord knew how long! "I believe it isn't anything very bad, because he says he can fix it, only he doesn't know how long it'll take. This is grand, isn't it? This just suits us. We're

not in any hurry to get there; we don't give a darn if we *never* see Cuba. I'd like to spend a summer vacation right on this spot. The bathing facilities are so good, you know."

"How far are we out, anyhow?"

"Too far to swim, that's all I know," said the correspondent. He resumed his lounge. They all sat awhile in disconcerted silence, until at length somebody proposed the cards to pass time away; and they were on the seventh hand of cutthroat, when Captain Bowers came and joined them. For a moment, this looked encouraging; but to their eager inquiry about the prospects, he would only say that he didn't know — it might be two or three hours yet — perhaps more — he couldn't say — depended on what Tom found when he got the jacket off — he couldn't say — "It's your deal, ain't it, Kendrick? My cut."

As they were sitting, Van having just dealt, and turned the queen of diamonds, on a sudden, they heard, a good way to the southwest, a dull rolling and booming sound that paused and presently broke out again.

"*Hello!*" said Schreiber, looking up and around; "storm somewhere?"

Captain Bowers laid down his hand of cards and said, "Boys, that's cannon!"

In a minute the engineer, chancing to stick out his head for a breath of air, stopped in the act of mopping the sweat from his forehead and arms with a handful of waste, and called in surprise: "What's the matter? D'ye see anything? What did you fellows all jump up that way for?" He had heard nothing in the midst of his own noise and clanging. The rest looked at one another shamefacedly; they discovered that they had all, on the same unconscious impulse, scrambled to their feet, and were crowding and staring in the direction of the cannonading, as if they might expect to see it, or get nearer to it by the action! In fact, by some illu-



sion, the next detonations seemed to them for an instant much louder. It kept on. They stood a long while listening. Once Schreiber said in a subdued voice: "My Lord, fellows, that sounds like the Fourth of July back home, and it's killing men right along!" Van Cleve, too, had been thinking of that; and of that evening, scarcely three weeks ago, when he had sat with Lorrie on the porch, and they wondered what cannon sounded like.

The captain looked at his watch and said it was ten o'clock; and one of them asked him where he thought the battle might be going on — if they were shelling the city, would we hear it? He shook his head. "Don't know. Them guns are firing at sea, though, whichever way they're being p'inted. The sound comes quicker to you on the water — leastways that's what I've always been told," he said circumspectly.

"Do you believe the fleet's trying to come out?" Van Cleve and the newspaper-man chorussed in one excited breath.

"I presume likely," said Captain Bowers.

He went to speak to the engineer, and Schreiber watched him with a certain admiration. "If he was in a book now, you wouldn't believe in him; you'd think he was ridiculously overdrawn," he said to Van; "he doesn't seem *possible*, somehow, with his tugboat and his chin-beard, and that funny down-east drawl. 'Presume likely!' Like any old New England deacon! You notice he never swears? You can't phase him — *nothing* phases him!"

They tried to resume the game, but even the unphasable Captain Bowers was not quite equal to that, and after he had attempted to take Takuhira's knave of trumps with the king, after Van Cleve had announced that the deuce of spades had got into the euchre-deck through somebody's mistake and been dealt to him, and after Schreiber had twice neglected to follow suit

to the left bower, they gave it up with some sheepish joking. The day wore on. The cannon ceased, and the silence left them all at a higher tension than ever. The cook fished out from somewhere an old battered pair of glasses with a flawed lens, and from that on somebody was constantly on the lookout (though the thing would scarcely carry a hundred yards) sweeping the seas round and round in expectation of no one knew what. At some time in the afternoon they sat down to a belated and half-cooked meal whereat the engineer complained loud and bitterly. He wanted to know what all you dubs (and sundry other unamiable designations) were doing, anyhow? He opined that he was the only man within sight or hearing who was on his job. He intimated highly uncomplimentary doubts as to the mind, morals, parentage, and previous career of everybody on board, especially the cook, which the latter gentleman naturally resented. Captain Bowers had to intervene; and in the middle of it all somebody cried that the guns were going again, producing peace on the instant, as if by magic! Afterwards, realizing that there was some justice in his point of view, one or other of them volunteered as engineer's helper, and held a candle, or passed tools, or hung on a wrench at intervals the rest of the day. Van Cleve, for one, was glad of any employment; his nerves, like everybody's, were feeling the strain. It was dark before they got started.

It was night, in fact, which came on them with the startling suddenness of the tropics, clouded over, with no stars nor moonlight. The little tug, crowding on all steam, ploughed through the vast, black, watery silence with as much commotion as leviathan, reckless of consequences. Excepting Captain Bowers and the Japanese, both of whom contrived to keep an appearance, at least, of stolidity, everybody was very much excited, and there was a good deal of random talk and laughing at

nothing ; also, the cook wanted to sing, and wept when Bowers forbade it and sternly took away his bottle of whiskey. Schreiber expostulated sympathetically. "Why, with all the noise we're making, what's the odds if he does sing, captain? Nobody could hear him."

"We could hear him," said the captain, with epigrammatic force. They all thought this was a prodigiously good joke on the cook ; Van Cleve never remembered to have laughed so heartily !

"I suppose if we *should* run into a Spanish ship, they wouldn't do a thing to us?" he said to Schreiber in ironical gayety.

"Not a thing !" agreed the other. Then he added more seriously : "But they won't be coming this way, you know. They'll make for Havana, most likely — if they get away at all." That the Spanish might have won in the contest did not occur to either of them.

Some while after this, Van Cleve observed a small, steady star very low down near what should have been the horizon, as he judged, if they had been able to distinguish sea from sky ; he pointed it out casually to the captain, who threw a perfunctory glance in the direction and grunted.

"That's the land," he said ; "that's a light somewhere on shore. You could 'a' heard the surf if you'd listened. Hear it now?"

Van strained his ears, but could make out nothing ; the throbbing of their machinery and the loud rush of water alongside overpowered his landsman's senses ; Schreiber affirmed that he could see the coast in black outline against the lesser blackness, but perhaps his fancy helped him. In a little the light vanished, blotted out, no doubt, by some reach of land, for they were both quite sure they felt the vessel veer sharply and change her course. And now, all at once, there came to them a great, hot, sighing breath, offshore, laden (or so they imagined) with earth odors, strange and

familiar; then a cool puff; then another warm. The feeling of it was curiously welcome; land is good after the sea. The *Milton D. Bowers* slacked up; she had a grotesque air of suddenly remembering something.

"Guess the old man thinks we'd better go slow here," Schreiber suggested in an undertone; "he doesn't quite know where he is — no lights nor anything. We must be somewhere off Guantanamo, I think."

He had not finished speaking when there roared up out of the darkness a huge devastating bulk, a thing of terror coming at them like the end of the world. There was a light. Van Cleve for one appalling second beheld a mighty, gray shoulder towering above them, imminent, unescapable. "It looked as high as the Union Trust Building," he said afterwards. It was in reality the bow of the torpedo-boat destroyer *Inverness*, not considered by naval judges at all a large or powerful vessel. She thundered upon them; the *Milton D. Bowers* raised a wild screech as from one throat, and went astern in a frenzy; and the *Inverness* must have sheered just in the nick of time, or they would all, herself included, have been at the bottom of the sea, and this tale need never have been written. As it was, the glancing blow she struck them sent the poor tug staggering, and there was a blood-curdling noise of splintered wood. When Van got his breath, he found himself in the foolish attitude of clinging to the far rail, and "holding back" with might and main! They were still afloat; they were still on an even keel. Near him Schreiber sprawled on the deck, clutching one ankle and cursing voluminously; he had sprained it, falling over a pile of coal, and was in severe pain. Extraordinary sounds arose from every part of the boat; somebody was praying in a loud, rapid, fervent voice like a camp-meeting preacher. There was a hail from above.

"*Goldenrod*, ahoy! Are you much hurt?"

"This ain't no *Goldenrod*. This is the *Milton D. Bowers*," shouted the captain, crossly; and in a moment Van saw him aft with a lantern over the side, studying the damage. The prayers ceased abruptly; Van Cleve had a suspicion they proceeded from the cook, but he never knew. Takuhira appeared from nowhere, and helped Schreiber take off his shoe. Up overhead an invisible power manipulated the light this way and that, until the tug lay within its zone; they could see faces, kindly and concerned and inquiring, peering down at them. A man whom Van, in his ignorance of naval matters, supposed to be a "petty officer," whatever that might mean, repeated the former question. "Are you much hurt? Need any help?" he asked.

Captain Bowers, after further scrutiny, pronounced the *Milton D.* in no danger. "She ain't started anywhere, fur's I kin see, jest her side planed off some," he said, and, walking to the engine-house, called in, "All right there, Tom?"

"I guess so," said the engineer from the depths.

"You ought to have kept out of the way, captain. We can't have anybody gum-shoeing around here, *you know that*," remarked the *Inverness*, and made another offer of standing by in case they discovered trouble. Captain Bowers grumpily declining, the officer turned away, probably to report to a superior. Some of the heads disappeared from the rail; one of those remaining facetiously invited his mates to come and see the bunch of Weary Willies in the cup-defender. Another wanted to know who the reverend conducting services was? Van Cleve stared up at them in wonder; he had supposed that everybody — of the rank and file, at least — had to keep mum as a mouse on board a war-ship. They could hear an order given; the big hull vibrated; the *Inverness* began deliberately and impressively to back away. Even in the midst of his suffering, professional zeal awoke in the newspaper-

correspondent; he hobbled upright, clinging to Taku-hira's shoulder, and hailed desperately.

"Hi! Wait, will you? What's happened? We heard cannon. What's doing? Was there a fight?"

The *Inverness* did not answer; silence had suddenly fallen on board of her, and all the faces retreated. In a moment the man who had spoken to them first came back, making way at the rail for a tall gentleman in a beautiful, clean, snowy white, tropical uniform, at once cool and radiant in the half-light. He could be seen to look them over with good-natured condescension, while the subordinate pointed and explained; then he nodded, gave the other an order (as it seemed) and, walked away. Schreiber witnessed the pantomime in an agony of curiosity. The first man stepped again to the side; he set a hand to his mouth and cried out, "Newspaper-boat?"

"Yes. *Gulf States Magazine*, *Jacksonville Telegraph*, *Atlanta Post*, *Charleston Mail*!" the correspondent roared back impatiently. None of the last-named papers had any existence outside of his own imagination, as he later informed Van Cleve. "That ought to be enough for you," he added under his breath. "*Newspaper-boat*! Take us for a party of Episcopal bishops?"

"Well, you can tell 'em the fleet came out!"

"Where are they? What became of 'em? What — who — which —?" Schreiber was fairly inarticulate from excitement; he hopped madly on one leg.

"Sunk — beached — burned up — the whole shootin' match!" bawled their informant, succinctly. He made a dramatic pause. "Had to chase one of 'em down the coast a good piece, but we nipped her, too!" The *Inverness* gathered way, moving off, and the wash she kicked up slapped against the tug, causing it to rock violently. He raised his voice, making a trumpet of both hands this time. "Pity you missed it. It's all over but the shouting. There ain't any more Spanish Fleet!"

## CHAPTER V

### BUT 'T WAS A GLORIOUS VICTORY

NEXT morning at daybreak, the argonauts steamed into the harbor of Guantanamo, which they found already populous with shipping, colliers, transports, lighters, a whole fleet of little vessels of their own caliber, herded together in one place where the *Milton D. Bowers* herself modestly sought a berth, and half a dozen tall warships. They recognized their friend of the night before, the *Inverness*, now peaceably riding at anchor on the east side of the channel, close inshore and just opposite some ridges of freshly turned earth which looked like the bunkers on the golf-links at home, Van Cleve thought, but which, he was told, were the intrenchments of Camp Huntington. All around there were other earthworks and tents, white and blue and khaki-colored uniforms going to and fro, bugle-calls and the smoke of camp-fires, and overhead the flag spreading its brave and cheerful colors on a strong breeze. It was a stirring spectacle; and though this place is adorned with some of as noble and beautiful scenery as may be found anywhere in the world, I doubt if the travellers made much of it. They were not caring for scenery, and the sight of this armed occupation, vigilant and powerful, and the news of the past night would have distracted them from the most wonderful panorama on the face of the globe.

They landed, Schreiber insisting on going, too, although he was limping painfully, with his ankle very much swollen in a rough bandage they had contrived,

and went up to a shining little sheet-iron-walled stove of a building which they had found to be the telegraph-office, at the foot of the hill under Captain McCalla's camp of marines; and here Schreiber had the luck to fall in with two other correspondents, a Mr. Hunter of the New York *Planet*, and another man whose name Van Cleve did not catch, both of them just from the front with accounts of Saturday's fighting and San Juan Hill. The army had known nothing of the navy's doings, and supposed the cannonading they had heard to be Sampson bombarding the forts at the mouth of the harbor, as he had done before! "Pshaw, *we* knew better than that!" said Schreiber, with mock superiority.

"Well, our fellows have too many other things to think about, back there in the jungle," Hunter said. He told them something of the fight, the other man joining in. It hadn't been any such soft snap as the navy boys had, to judge by what you heard. *These* Spaniards weren't running away, nor dreaming of it; they were fighters — they could shoot, too. "Why, it took Lawton nearly a whole day, nearly the whole of Friday — let's see, it *was* Friday, wasn't it, Jim? — to carry that position at that little town where the church was, Caney they called it — nearly the whole day, and everybody thought it wouldn't be but an hour or so! Well, of course, they outnumbered our fellows. Oh, yes, two to one at least. The Cubans hardly counted; *we* did the real fighting. Oh, I suppose some of the Cubans did pretty well, but I didn't see any of 'em. They weren't near so many of them wounded and killed as we had, in proportion. Bet you, if it wasn't for us, they'd be butchering the Spanish prisoners in cold blood right this minute; that's about what the Spanish and Cubans were doing to each other before we came, you know. Everybody says that's the reason the Spanish fight so desperately; they fully expect to be shot down without mercy, if they get caught. How's



that for barbarity and ignorance? Did you hear about that poor fellow, Lieutenant Ord of the Sixth? Did you hear what happened to him? Why, he got to the top of the hill with the first ones when they charged it (Hey? Yes, it was the Sixth, and the Rough Riders, and the colored regiment, and parts of other regiments mixed in), and this Ord came to a Spaniard lying there badly wounded, and says: 'Look out for this man, boys,' or 'Pick up this fellow and see he gets taken care of,' or something like that. And with that the Spaniard raised up and shot him through the heart! Suppose he thought Ord was telling the men to bayonet him and finish him. Probably that's what a Spanish or Cuban officer would have done. Eh? Oh, the men killed him; about tore him to pieces, they say. They thought a great deal of Ord. Nice fellow, they say — I never happened to meet him. But that just shows you what kind these Spanish are; and let me tell you, we won't any of us have much use for the Cubans, either, by the time we get through with it. Dog eat dog, that's what it is. Uncle Sam's going to be thoroughly sick of this Cuba Libre job before long. All our fine men sacrificed! You ought to see the wounded — or rather you oughtn't to see them if you can help it. My God, it's awful! Awful. War's about what Sherman said it was, I guess."

They talked on a little excitedly at times, still under the spell of what they had witnessed. Both of them were dirty, haggard, ready to drop with fatigue; Hunter told Van he had not slept for fifteen hours, most of which had been spent on the way from the battle-field here. It was nothing but a jungle trail, almost impassable in places, and they had been obliged to tramp the most of it, their horses having given out very soon; it was next to impossible to get any kind of transportation in the country. Nevertheless, they were starting back as soon as they had had some rest; something

might happen any minute, and they didn't want to miss it. Schreiber ruefully cursed his luck; he realized that they could not be burdened with a lame man, or he would have gone with them, ankle and all. In fact, they earnestly counselled him to keep on by boat to Siboney. "There's nothing more for *us* in the sea side of the fighting, or we'd go back that way ourselves," Hunter explained. "Thing is we want to be on land the whole time now. Yesterday afternoon before we left camp there was talk around that Shafter was thinking of falling back — retreating five miles or so into the hills. That would probably be in this direction. But you'd better go on to Siboney, and you can follow the army up in case they do move." They were very willing, however, to have Takuhira accompany them; one of them had met his countryman, Lieutenant Akiyama of the Imperial Japanese Navy, who was now with the fleet, observing operations. Van Cleve, too, might have gone, but upon hearing his errand, although neither of them, unfortunately, knew his friend Gilbert, they both assured him that Siboney would be the best place to look for him.

"Everybody's there, or has been there — or at Daiquiri. The Red Cross, and the correspondents, and the post-office people, and everybody. That's the place to look for any one. If you can't find him, you're sure to find somebody that knows him, and can put you on his trail," they said. Van began to feel that he was getting "hot," as they say in the children's games, and wanted to go at once and send telegrams to Lorrie, and to his family; but the gentleman in charge of the station refused, not without a smile. The government, he said politely, had raised and repaired the Haytian cable at this point for its own use, and private individuals, unless in some such capacity as Mr. Hunter's, had no status just then. Of course, if Mr. Kendrick had some life-and-death matter — but merely to reas-

sure his people — "I understand!" said Van, cutting him short brusquely, annoyed at himself.

Afterwards the party all dined together on board the *Milton D. Bowers*, magnificently, the cook having found means to add some crabs and a basket of mangoes to their ordinary bill-of-fare, which was further enriched by a can of baked beans from some unknown source. "I tell you, the boys at the front would like some of this! Those beans would look like the Waldorf-Astoria to them," said one of the correspondents; "all the time we've been with them, nobody's had anything but bacon and hardtack, and not too much of that, poor fellows! Well, war's war, I suppose!" With which philosophical reflection he fell to heartily.

At two o'clock the *Milton D.*, according to arrangement, once more set sail; and Van Cleve bade good-by to these gentlemen, none of whom, I believe, he has ever met since, except the Japanese *attaché*, who turned up a few days later at Siboney in company with Major Shiba, the other military envoy of his country. Mr. Takuhira must have borrowed some of his superior's clothes, or recruited his wardrobe from somewhere, for he was quite immaculate in white ducks and fresh linen, notwithstanding which he shook hands with Van Cleve (who was anything but immaculate in the same blue flannel shirt he had worn for nearly a fortnight) with democratic heartiness, and wished him well, and laughed and said "*Sayonara!* So long, old chap!" as he got into the waiting launch. Santiago had surrendered; the campaign was over; the foreign officers in observation were returning to the quarters assigned them on board ship; even for Van Cleve himself, the adventure was ended.

He was very far from foreseeing all this, though, as they steamed west along the coast in a heavy sea and rising storm, with Schreiber erelong wretchedly ill

in the cabin, as usual, and Captain Bowers taciturnly smoking a particularly rank and vicious pipe which he seemed to enjoy most when the tug's motion was at its worst. By this time, Van had got used to the idea of chasing Bob Gilbert about and never finding him; he expected another hunt at Siboney, and to be told again of some fresh place to which the luckless fellow might have gone. The next morning, after a night of threshing about in the seas, Van was not much surprised to hear that it would be impossible to make a landing until the wind and swell died down somewhat. He could both see and hear the surf now, booming and breaking on the shore of the unprotected little cove, a formidable spectacle. They contemplated it all day long, the tug taking up a station a quarter of a mile out, in line with a number of transports and other vessels, like themselves afraid to risk launching a boat in such weather. Siboney appeared from this distance to be a row of shanties, a half-constructed pier, and the broken ruins of an old one swept by waves, with a slender strip of beach in front and, grimmest sight of all, a big lighter, lying on her side, about fifty yards from shore, a castaway, with the seas pounding over her desolately.

"Them other things you kin make out closer in-shore is some more boats and truck that got stove in trying to land through the surf," Captain Bowers said, pointing out various dark objects which had puzzled Van Cleve's inexperienced eyes. "Ain't it a sin 'n' a shame? All that good stuff wasted!" His tone was mournful; it was the first and only time he had displayed so much feeling of any kind, but Van understood and thoroughly sympathized. The young man's own thrifty soul was outraged.

After twelve hours or so more of waiting, during which, although there was a great deal of coming and going on shore, they heard no sounds of firing, or

other indications of hostilities being resumed, he and Schreiber at last got to land in a rowboat manned by a pair of tatterdemalions which came out to meet them finally, in answer to repeated signals, when Captain Bowers had taken the tug in as near as was prudent. Both boatmen were armed with pistols and machetes, though nowise soldierly (or indeed at all prepossessing) in appearance. "Must be the commanding general of the Cuban armies and his chief of staff," the newspaper-man suggested satirically; "and, by George, look at the rest of the patriots getting ready to land us! Look out for your watch, Kendrick!" In fact, there seemed to be a lively traffic of this sort among the native longshoremen, running down into the water to seize a boat by the bows, and rush it bodily through the surf, up high and dry on the sand. There was a mob of them, clamoring, villainous-faced, incredibly dirty; the beach was busy as a hive. It was littered with wreckage of lighters and launches, partly submerged, or standing up stark and stiff when the tide was out. There were mounds of barrels and boxes covered with tarpaulin, under guard; mule-teams and wagons, their drivers cursing royally; soldiers without end; and a handful of bedraggled-looking civilians, government employees, members of the Red Cross commission, more correspondents. The line of huts they had seen from the harbor the day before turned out to be ten or a dozen zinc-roofed, boxlike structures built originally by the Spanish-American Iron Company, which had mines somewhere in the neighborhood, as Schreiber vaguely recollected hearing, for its operatives, but now in use as hospitals; and one of them, the largest, bore a sign: "United States Post-Office, Military Station No. 1." Van Cleve and his companion walked up towards it. Fresh from the strong, clean sea, they had not gone a hundred steps inland when a puff of tepid, foul air,

heavy with unspeakable odors of animal and vegetable decay commingled, fairly strangled them. Schreiber, who had been limping vigorously ahead, turned alarmingly pale and faint for a second; but he kept on gallantly. "That had a kind of yellow-fever taste, didn't it?" he gasped with unquenchable levity. "Cheer up, the worst is yet to come! Did you see that dead mule behind one of the houses just now? He was very dead. In fact, he must have been quite entirely dead about the week before last, I should judge. Viva Cuba Libre!"

Military Post-Office No. 1 had a high stoop in front of it, that gave it a queer likeness to the country cross-roads store and post-office combined in a village of the same size at home; and two or three loungers on the porch, as our friends came up, heightened the resemblance. "How it reminds me of that dear Rising Sun, Indiana!" murmured Schreiber, tenderly. There were a couple of privates waiting, probably, for their regimental mail to be sorted out, and another man, not a soldier, as he was dressed in canvas trousers, boots, and a sweater, was taking a nap in informal style stretched out on the floor, with an arm across his face. The two orderlies glanced at the newcomers without curiosity, and went on with a desultory conversation wherein war and conquest or other trade topics were not in the least concerned. "— the first time was at a picnic given by the Eagles — Independent Order of Eagles, y' know, they're pretty strong with us — and I couldn't say exactly how often since," said one of them, finishing some statement; and the other nodded indifferently.

"That fellow there lays like he was dead — notice?" he said presently. "Guess he's about played out. He's just as still!"

"Dead! Well, I reckon he's deader drunk than any other kind of dead," said the other man, with a laugh.

"They don't lay that way when they're shot, though — mostly they lay all kind of crumpled up, in *my* experience," he added, with the air of a veteran. He was a smooth-chinned lad of twenty-three or thereabouts. Van Cleve and Schreiber went inside. In the stifling heat, two clerks, one in pajamas and the other wearing an undershirt, blue denim overalls, and a pair of carpet-slippers on his bare feet, were sorting mail.

"Look in the rack. All you fellows' mail is together in one place — right over there. You can just look for yourself," one of them answered the correspondent wearily, scarcely glancing up from the piles of letters he was shuffling to and fro. Van, however, was not expecting anything; nobody knew where he was. He wanted to post a letter he had written to Lorrie the night before; and that done, hastily retreated to the open air, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"Hot, ain't it?" said one of the soldiers, amiably.

"I don't see how those men stand it in there. Another minute of that oven would have finished me," declared Van.

Schreiber came to the door behind him and said, not without excitement; "Look here, Kendrick, there're two letters there for your friend. I saw them. R. D. Gilbert — that's he, isn't it? His folks must have got on to where to find him. He's probably written."

"R. D. Gilbert?" said Van Cleve, with a start. "Then he's *here*, to a certainty. I wonder if any of them in the post-office know him." He was turning to go inside again, when at the second repetition of the name, the man on the floor stirred, rolled over, sat up at last after two or three efforts, staring around with a puffy, reddened face. "Whazzat? What you want?" said Bob.

If this meeting had occurred on the melodramatic stage, for which as an incident it was well suited, Van

Cleve would undoubtedly have had to exclaim: "My God, *Bob!* You here!" clutching his temples in a frenzy of horrified astonishment. The plain fact is, he did and said for an instant, nothing at all. It took him that time to realize that this *was* Bob — Bob at last in a worse state from drink and hardships than Van had ever seen him, gaunt, disordered, blear-eyed, almost repulsive. In another moment, he perceived that Bob, although looking straight at him, had not yet recognized him, which, to be sure, was not to be wondered at, Van quickly remembered, considering his own appearance and that he was the last person Robert would be expecting to see. Schreiber, who also had been staring hard, now burst out with: "Well, I'll be — why, *that's* Gilbert! *Isn't* it Gilbert? Why, *that's* him *now!* Well, I'll be —!" he looked all around helplessly. Bob surveyed him with blank eyes.

"Friend of yours?" said one of the soldiers, addressing Schreiber.

"No — yes — that is, *here's* his friend. *This* is his friend. Been chasing him fifteen hundred miles! Wouldn't that jar you, though? Fifteen hundred miles! And here he is!"

"Why, hello, Bob!" said Van Cleve, mechanically. Then he collected himself, and made another effort. "Hello, Bob, don't you know me? It's Van Cleve Kendrick, you know — *Van Cleve*, you know!" Unconsciously he raised his harsh voice, as he repeated the name. Bob eyed him so dully and unresponsively, it made him anxious.

"No use hollerin' at him, mister. Better let him sleep it off," observed one of the privates; "he's pickled for fair!"

"No, he ain't, he'll know you in a minute," said the other with a judicial glance; "he knew when you called his name just now. Wake up, bo!" he con-



tinued to Bob, genially ; "here's somebody come to see you !"

This experienced gentleman was right ; Robert had unquestionably had some liquor, but that he was legitimately fagged out from exertion, want of sleep, and, very likely, want of food would have been evident, on a closer inspection, to anybody. He got upon his feet, while they were speaking, without any help, looked hard at the dirty, bearded man in front of him, and ejaculated at last in his own natural voice, but filled with bewilderment : "Van Cleve ! It's not *you*, Van ?"

"See ? What'd I tell you ? He's got you !" said the soldier, triumphantly.

"How'd you get here ?" said Bob. In the wonder and perplexity of the moment, neither of them thought of shaking hands. Van Cleve's wits, in truth, were at a standstill ; he had never speculated much as to the precise environment and conditions wherein he would find his friend, and had no plans about what he was going to say other than to tell Bob plainly and forcibly that having betrayed a young woman according to her own confession, he must come home and marry her. He had not thought this duty too hard ; it was something that had to be done, and, for Van Cleve, that dismissed all objections. What he had not allowed for, was such a chance as this ; the open beach, the crowded, noisy camp where decent privacy seemed a thing unobtainable, the sudden stumbling upon the man he sought. He was inordinately taken aback. It was only for a second, but the others looked at him curiously. Bob all at once recognized Schreiber, and spoke to him by name, and they two shook hands enthusiastically. Robert pulled out a half-empty flask from his hip-pocket, and offered it all around, "Have a drink ? It'll do you good. Got to take a little stimulant in this climate, you know. I do myself all

the time," he said frankly ; " here's how, boys! What's your regiment? Oh, *two* regiments? We'll have to have two drinks on that! What's *yours*? Third? Bully for the Third! Here, got to drink to your regiment, you know. What's *yours*, hey?"

The second young fellow said, with an uneasy grin, glancing at the others, that he belonged to the Twentieth, and he didn't want any, thank, sir. Van Cleve interfered. "You've had enough of that, Bob," he said, the exertion of authority restoring him to his habitual poise on the instant ; "here, give me the bottle. You want something to eat, that's what you want. Where do you go here?"

"Aw, Van Cleve —!" Bob began pleadingly ; but he surrendered his flask without more protest. No amount of drinking could overcome the poor sinner's native gentleness and tractability. "Kind of good to see you, Van," he said next affectionately ; "but I must say, you took me by surprise. Don't all of us look like tramps, though!" He cast a glance of whimsical appreciation over his own figure and his friend's. "How'd you get here?"

"Why, I — I'll tell you presently. I'd like to get something to eat, first. Where do you live? Where do you go to eat and sleep, I mean?"

Bob burst into a laugh, broken by hiccoughs. "Where do I live? Where do any of us live? How's that, fellows? Where do we all live? Why, in Cuba, first turn to your left and keep on going!" He looked to Schreiber for sympathy. "What's *your* address, Schreib.?"

"It's going to be Herman Schreiber, Esquire, The Front, directly," said the war-correspondent, himself amused. "He's about right, Kendrick, you don't live, nor eat, nor sleep anywhere — you just get along the best you can. What's doing, anyhow, Gil?"

"At the front? Nothing. No fighting, I mean.

I came back last night. I was all in. I've been trying to get a little rest."

"Lying here on the ground?" Van said, thinking with a certain shock of Mrs. Gilbert and Lorrie. If they knew — ! If they could see him — ! But, thank Heaven, they couldn't !

Bob nodded, momentarily speechless in a fit of coughing. "Sure! No place else to go, you know," he said when he got his breath. "Why not? It's what they all do — sick and wounded and all. What's good enough for our army, is good enough for me, I hope."

Van Cleve eyed him over with a good deal of secret worry. Under the mask of dirt and sunburn, and apart from the specific look of the hard drinker with the lines and hollows and unwholesome textures that Bob's face had begun to show long ago, Van Cleve thought he detected some appearance graver still; that cough and that stoop were not due wholly to privation and too much whiskey, he said to himself. For a flash he was astounded at the alarm that gripped him. Bob was worthless; but he loved Bob. "You haven't had anything to eat yet?" he said roughly, as usual, when he was much moved. And the other, shaking his head in a renewed paroxysm of coughing, Van took him by the arm; "come along, we'll get something — we'll hunt it up somewhere," he said.

They got Bob's mail — a letter from his father, and one from Lorrie with the Tampa postmark, as Van Cleve noted to his surprise — and started off, the newspaper-man, who did not lack a gift of tact, bidding them good-by pleasantly and taking the opposite direction.

## CHAPTER VI

### IN WHICH WE WITNESS A SURRENDER

"How on earth did you ever happen to hook up with *him* — Schreiber, you know? How did you happen to come down here, anyhow?" Bob wanted to know, in recurrent wonder. "Think of my not knowing who you were at first! But, Van, I was simply stunned, I couldn't *believe* it was you." He looked into his friend's face, in sudden affectionate anxiety. "You don't mind, do you? My not knowing you right off, I mean? I thought you looked as if you didn't like it, for a minute. But honestly, Van Cleve, I couldn't help it."

"Oh, that's all right. I don't think anything of that. It was perfectly natural," said Van Cleve, shortly; he was unconscious of the impatient note in his voice, of the scowl between his deep-set eyes. The thing he had to do was on his mind, and it had all at once become hateful to him, utterly abhorrent. Robert looked so sick and shaken, Van Cleve wanted to take care of him, not to accuse and coerce him; moreover, face to face, Bob seemed, as he always had to his friend, intrinsically harmless; he wronged himself terribly and irretrievably, but it was hard to believe that he could wrong anybody else. "Damn that girl!" Van thought angrily; "if she's any too good herself, I miss my guess! It would be easy enough to lead Bob into anything, and blame any trouble that came along afterwards on him. He's a mark for any woman."

Bob was speaking again. "Old grouch!" he said,

thumping his friend's shoulder caressingly. "What made you come here, anyhow, Van Cleve? Did you just take a notion you'd come, or how was it?"

"Well, I — I came after you really, Bob. The family want you to come home."

"They know the *Record-World* fired me; I suppose that's the reason?" said Bob, with a kind of amiable annoyance.

"Why, yes — one reason."

Bob began to explain cheerfully. "I suppose they had to — the management, I mean. I haven't any kick to make about it. They're all pretty square men, and they did the right thing, from their standpoint, to let me out. I'd — I'd been drinking. It's hard to keep out of it; everybody drinks more or less, but most of the men get away with it somehow. They stand it better than I do; they can hold more without its affecting them. Oh, well, I never did much like the work, anyhow — running around, asking an infernal lot of questions, and prying into other people's business; it isn't much of a gentleman's job, seems to me. I was about ready to quit when they notified me. I'm even on the transaction. I've got the experience, and that's all there was in it for me; it'll be invaluable in anything else I go into," he concluded comfortably, and dismissed the subject. "But I don't see why you thought you had to come down here after me, Van. You didn't need to take all that trouble. Was mother worrying?"

"Well, you see they didn't know where you were or what had become of you."

"Why, I wrote them. I told them all about it. I told them I was going on with the army. And then I wrote again from here, as soon as I found out about the postal arrangements, and told them to address me here."

"They hadn't got that letter when we left home,

of course. But they must have since, for I see Lorrie's written you from Tampa," said Van Cleve.

Bob stared at him in stark amazement. "Lorrie? At Tampa? What's Lorrie doing at Tampa? They're not all of them there?"

"No, just Lorrie. She thought you were there, and she wanted to get to you. I brought her. She *would* come," Van said, rather defensively, as he saw the indignant surprise on the brother's face. Robert was genuinely shocked. The mere mention of Lorrie awoke all the manliness there was in him; Lorrie was his creed and his conscience.

"*Would* come? What were they thinking of — what were *you* thinking of, to let her come? That's no place for our Lorrie. *Would* come! You talk as if Lorrie were one of these hysterical, tomfool women that have to be given in to, or they'll go crazy. Lorrie's got *sense*. What did she want to come after me for?" He stopped; and a new expression came over his face, a look of self-forgetful sympathy and tenderness that made it beautiful with all the grime and weariness and marks of dissipation. "Oh, I see! It was Phil. Poor Lorrie! You can't blame her for that. She wanted to be near Phil. Poor Lorrie!" All his features quivered. "Cort's dead. You knew that, Van? Killed right at the first before he'd had a chance to do anything — poor Cort! He was the *best* fellow. I know you never liked him, but you didn't know him. Cort was a splendid fellow."

"I'm sorry for Lorrie just the same," said Van Cleve.

"Is she — does she know? How is she?"

Van Cleve shook his head gravely. "Don't ask, Bob. It's the saddest thing I ever saw. Yes, she heard it one of the first." He described the Tampa experiences briefly. "The uncertainty was cruelly hard on her. But of course, that's all over now."

Bob said, "Yes, it's all over," and passed the back of his hand across his eyes. After a moment of striving to get his voice under control, he managed to add: "You know I saw it, Van Cleve. I saw him after he was shot."

"You did!"

The other nodded, twisting his lips as if in bodily pain at the mere recollection. "Yes. Oh, my God, cruel things happen in war! Yes, I saw it. I wasn't up in front where he was when the fighting began. I was coming along behind, with another fellow — another newspaper-man, I mean. I don't know who he was. I suppose we must have been a couple of hundred yards behind the nearest soldiers. They marched in two lots — two divisions, you know, some of them straight up this ravine (you come to the Santiago road that way directly) and Wood's men, the Rough Riders (only they didn't have any horses) went up that steep place, past the blockhouse — that one over there to your left — you're looking the wrong direction. I followed *them*. It was terribly hot. Sometimes when we got to one of those little narrow places, all walled in with trees and vines grown up solid on both sides, it was like being at the bottom of some kind of red-hot well. It made your head swim. Some of the men fainted. When there began to be firing in front, the men got an order to move faster. You never would have called it a charge; it wasn't anything like the things you read about in books. They — they just walked along a little faster. When we caught up with them I saw one man near me get his sleeve hooked on a thorn, and he stopped to pull it away, and scratched his finger and said '*Damn!*' and stuck it in his mouth! All the time the firing was going on in front."

"They said Cortwright and those other men were killed at the first fire," Van Cleve interrupted him.

"Yes, I know. I worked off to the side somehow. You couldn't see a thing, you know. The bushes were full of men spread out trying to get through. I don't believe any of them knew where they were any more than I did, after a little while. They just kept going towards where you could hear the guns. The whole thing only lasted an hour, about. Cort didn't die right off; some of them were shot dead where they stood, but he wasn't. They lifted him out of the way over into some of the bushes. It was just the way you sometimes see a dead cat in an alley at home, stuck over in the gutter till the street-cleaners come and get it. They couldn't help it; they couldn't stop to see about dying men; they just had to get him out of the road and keep on. Cruel things happen in war."

Bob paused, his face working. He began again: "I didn't know about Cortwright until I walked on to him almost. You don't know anything that's happening anywhere in a battle except right where you are. I almost walked on to him." Bob stopped again; he swallowed, and wiped the sweat from his face. "He was lying there breathing with a — with a thick sound, and his eyes half-closed showing the whites, and his face all gray. He used to be so good-looking and — and rather vain of his looks, too, you recollect, Van; any man would have been. And he looked so you didn't want to touch him. That's horrible, but it's so. I got over that, though, and went and raised him up. I don't know whether he knew me or not, but he looked at me. I said, 'It's me; it's Bob Gilbert, Corty, don't you know me?' but he just said in a whisper, 'I'm thirsty.' And then I gave him a drink out of a canteen I had, and he s-said, 'Thank you!'" Bob broke down and sobbed openly. "He was dying, Van; he was dying, and he said 'Thank you!'"



"Poor fellow!" said Van, touched. "Was that all?"

"Yes. He died. He never said another word. I wish he had. If he'd said Lorrie's name, I'd like to have told her. But he never spoke again."

There was a silence while Bob wiped his eyes on the sleeve of his soiled shirt, and Van Cleve stared abstractedly at the glaring beach and sea. "Well, a man can die but once," said the latter at last; "I suppose getting shot's as good a way as there is, when all's said and done. It's quick, anyhow. I don't believe he could have suffered much."

"You — you couldn't let me have a drink of the whiskey now, could you, Van? I'm pretty well used up," said Bob, pitifully.

"Whiskey wouldn't do you any good," said Van Cleve, unmoved. They had found a temporary resting-place in the lee of what looked like a heap of lumber and scrap-iron, but was in reality a collection of wagons, "knocked down" in sections and roughly bundled together for transportation. And now a military-looking person came and ordered them away from it with few words and strong. Nevertheless, Van Cleve had the courage to inquire of him where food might be got. Robert had no money left, it appeared; he had nothing at all except the clothes on his back, and as he pathetically stated, some few of poor Cort's things, his watch and a little bundle of letters which Bob had taken off the body to give to Lorrie. "They buried him there close to where he was killed, like all the rest," he sighed. Van got out his wallet and gave him five dollars.

"Now look here, you'd better not stir around in this sun any more than you can help," he said with his practical kindness; "you stay near this place, while I go and see about the stuff to eat. In case anybody comes along with crackers or bananas, you might buy something without waiting for me, only you ought to be pretty careful, I think," and went off.

Alas, when he returned in half an hour or so with his supplies, Robert was nowhere in sight; and Van Cleve with gloomy forebodings which should have visited him earlier, after another half-hour of worried search, found the other as he had expected, in company with a villainous-eyed Cuban, quite drunk and happy in a nook of sand and scrub-palms, passing a newly acquired bottle back and forth. Bob had forgot all about "poor Cort," all about Lorrie, all about his own late reverses and adventures in this stimulating companionship; he hailed Van Cleve jovially. The Cuban, however, who was not in the least drunk, looked upon the arrival of this body-guard with a very darkling countenance; and as Van attempted to get Bob away, intervened with what sounded like evil words in Spanish, and what certainly was an evil expression.

"Get out of the way, you!" says Van Cleve, pushing Bob (who, as always, was perfectly amiable and obedient) along in front of him. "Come on, Bob. Yes, I know — it's all right, old fellow, but you want to come with *me*, you know, now. Get out, you! Huh, you would, would you? Well, I guess *not!* Not this time, anyway!"

The Cuban picked himself up, and fled with a yowl of malediction.

"'S right, knock him (*hic*) down, Van!" said Bob, gravely wagging his head in approval; "Cubans —" he flapped his hand — "Cubans no good. Only ought be careful, Van. Ought t'have gun."

Van Cleve clapped his hip-pocket. "Good Lord, I forgot all about it!" he ejaculated.

The next problem was to see Bob safely bestowed somewhere, out of reach, if possible, of any more sympathetic natives or brother-Americans; and in this extremity Van bethought him of the *Milton D. Bowers*. There she lay, two or three hundred yards out, peace-

ful and secure; and Captain Bowers made only one comment when the boat came alongside and they helped Robert aboard. "Found yer friend, I see. He's got a pretty good load," he remarked, turned his quid reflectively, spat into the water, and inquired: "He's the one you were figurin' on takin' back to the States, I presume likely?"

"Yes," said Van Cleve.

"On the *Milton D.*?" the captain asked, stroking his chin-beard.

"That's what I intend to do," said Van.

It is a pity that no reliable witness was at hand to report the battle of giants that ensued. Captain Bowers was a Connecticut Yankee; Van Cleve was his grandfather's grandson; it must have been a hot engagement. Van has never, naturally, been at all communicative about the episode, but one may conjecture it to have ended in a draw. "Oh, yes, he stuck me. But he didn't stick me as much as he expected," Mr. Kendrick has been heard to acknowledge. The Gilberts, I think, know nothing about the transaction to this day.

After all these events, and when he had left Bob stertorously sleeping in the cabin, Van Cleve, who had vaguely looked for the sun to be setting, found to his astonishment that it was barely noon! There had been no chance to say a word about the real cause of his visit; it would have been worse than useless to attempt the subject in Bob's present condition. And, having by this time reached a more philosophical mood about it, Van decided that the miserable affair might wait till the next day, without harm. By to-morrow Bob would be at any rate sober, and fit to listen. "His nerves can't suffer by it," thought Van, grimly; "they're all gone to pieces anyhow. He hasn't any constitution left. He'll probably have to go to Colorado or Arizona or somewhere to keep alive. I don't know

how the family will manage. Some people certainly do have a hard time." For his own part, he felt a sense of release, now that his errand was all but done. He wrote another note to Lorrie, briefly reciting that he had found her brother and was bringing him home; that Bob was in "fairly good shape, though looking rather tough, like everybody else down here." He hoped she was all right, and she must not worry, that everything was going along as smoothly as they could possibly expect; and as near as he could calculate just now, they would arrive at Tampa by Saturday or Monday at farthest; it couldn't take more than a week.

He went ashore again to post this; and wandering about fell in with and followed for some distance a string of pack mules taking supplies to the front; much of the road, it seemed, was almost impassable for wagons, although our engineers had widened and built it up in many places. It was nearly all as Bob had described it, sunken between solid walls of greenery, suffocatingly hot, and, until they began to climb the higher ground, steaming with noisome odors. He walked along by one of the drivers, who, seeing that he was feeling the heat, offered him a drink out of his canteen, which Van accepted gratefully; he had not thought to provide himself with water. They got into talk. The teamster had been picked up by the army at Mobile, being a graduate of one of the old, well-established academies of mule-driving to be found along the levees at Memphis and New Orleans, or indeed almost anywhere throughout the southern States; he said that he liked it "first rate," and reckoned he'd stick with the job as long as Colonel Humphries had any use for him. He was, in fact, quite open and sincere in a conviction that his department was the most valuable and indispensable in the entire army, of which he considered himself and his mules as much a

part as any regiment, brigade, or division ; and confided to Van Cleve that old Pete, his mainstay, that there big gray mule with that there scar on the flank, had been a little off his feed here lately ; he was afraid the climate was "getting to him" ; the trip in the transport hadn't done none of the mules no good. "If Pete er me was to be laid up with th' sun er fever er anythin', I dunno what they'd do — be doggoned if I know *what* they'd do !" he said seriously. It appeared there were none too many of either mules or packers. Van Cleve, if he was a little amused, rather liked him for this honest and simple point of view. "That's the way men ought to feel that are trying to do a big thing together ; every one as if his particular part of the job was the biggest of all," he thought.

His new acquaintance, in a week of traversing the Daiquiri and Siboney roads, backwards and forwards, had learned the country-side by heart, and knew the location of every body of troops as well as the commanding general himself. "Here's whar they had the first scrimmage. You-all heerd about that, I reckon," he said as they reached the summit of one of the ridges ; and, halting to breathe the mules, he pointed out to Van Cleve the entrance of the mesa trail where Wood's men had joined the others, and a shallow depression on one hand carpeted with cartridge shells in ominous profusion. "They must 'a' had it hot 'n' heavy right thar," he opined. But, for that matter, the jungle floor and pathways were now everywhere littered with grim reminders of the fight, rotting rags of bandages, bits of clothing, and wrecked stretchers. Van picked up one of the shells and put it in his pocket.

"They buried some man yonder, I see," he said, nodding toward a long mound near by.

"Buried a dozen er more of 'em all in th' one hole," said the teamster. "They didn't have time to mark

their names down, mebbe they didn't even know 'em."

Van Cleve went and looked down at the mound whereon some of the dead men's fellows had raked together a few stones in the shape of a cross. The sight of the poor tribute moved the young man strongly; he took off his hat as he stood. Already the rank jungle was creeping upon the grave, effacing it. Van Cleve wondered if Cortwright lay there. Cruel things happen in war.

Some way farther on they came to another crest, and suddenly for the first time the road and surrounding country opened in front of them; across the immediate valley was what looked like a mammoth green field, hills, a little shining patch of water, roads threading this way and that. Tents could be seen, and clusters of black dots, some of which moved apparently an inch or so while Van watched them; but mostly it was very still. It was not merely that there were no martial sights and sounds such as Van Cleve found he had been half expecting,—there was nothing; the peace of harvest time at home was not more quiet and urbane. He could have believed the landscape motionless in an enchantment.

"That's the city over thar, cap.—Santiago, y' know," said the driver, pointing with his whip to some faintly visible buildings, pink and dust colored, on the farther rim of the valley, as it seemed; "hey? Why, about seven or eight mile, I judge. This side, kinder frontin' to you, is San Juan Hill, whar they fit the other day."

"Do you mean that little bare spot over there? Is that a hill? I thought San Juan was a high place," said Van Cleve, in surprise.

"It were high enough," said the teamster, with a tinge of offence; but he relented directly, seeing that Van had had no idea of belittling the army's achievement; and showed him where to look for the earth-

works and blockhouses, and in what direction lay Caney, where there had been the bitter struggle last Friday. He could name some of the groups of tents and black dots. "Gin'ral Wheeler's division is right square acrost from us — less'n they've moved since yestiddy morning. A division is jest one lot o' men, you know," he explained carefully; "'tain't all the army. Thar's a whole passel more with Gin'ral Kent round here kinder quarterin' to yer left, and some 'way over on the other side. You can't see one or t'other of 'em from here. But headquarters is down this side tol'ble near whar we air now; if you step this way a little, you kin see th' flag."

"It's about ninety per cent safer than where General Wheeler is, I should say," commented Van Cleve, having, after repeated directions, at last located the spot, a great deal closer than he had supposed. "Is the commanding general always that handy to the rear?"

"Well, he's got ter kinder stay *put*, ye know. He's got to be alluz in th' one place so's they'll know whar to find him. And up in front, ye just nachelly *can't* stay in one place," the muleteer suggested, making ready to move on. "You Pete, you dig right out, now, you ol' — !" he addressed his convoy with much affectionate profanity. As it had taken them upwards of three hours to reach this point, Van thought that he himself had better return before night caught him on the road; and two wagonloads of sick and wounded on their way to the hospital at Siboney coming along just then, he joined them. He was keenly curious, and indeed promised himself to view the battle-field nearer, but did not have another chance. It was Van's fate to see the war throughout from its reverse side, to miss all its hideous splendors, to encounter none of its heroes. In a romance of any pretensions, Mr. Kendrick would by this time have been hand-in-glove with all

the celebrities on the field, and would, for his own part, have contributed dazzlingly to our successes. But as a matter of fact, during the whole of his desultory adventures, and among the numerous companions whom he picked up at random for a day or an hour, Van Cleve never spoke to anybody above the rank of a private, and saw and did nothing sensational.

When he came aboard, the cook reported that his friend had been a mite restive, although he was asleep again now. "Wouldn't wonder if he was jest about on the edge of seein' 'em — pink rats and such," he remarked, not without some pleasant excitement. And he kindly volunteered to sit up in case Van wanted help through the night. "I've had experience," he said, which indeed was highly likely. But fortunately these extreme measures were not necessary. Van Cleve went sound asleep, rolled up in his blanket on the deck. And when he waked up in the morning, with a start and the sensation of something unfinished and impending, which had got to be habitual with him these last three weeks, Bob himself was the first person he saw.

The poor fellow was completely sobered by now, and had got up and bathed and straightened his hair and clothing as best he might; and sat by Van Cleve, evidently watching and waiting for him to wake, with a grave and patient air. He smiled eagerly as their eyes met; Van Cleve put out his hand, and the other slid his own cold and shaking one into it with a confiding gesture like a child. "Top o' the morning, sir!" he said, and coughed. He had to take away his hand and clasp it against his chest in a fit of coughing.

Van Cleve did not speak for a moment. He was thinking, inconsequently enough, that in all their intimacy he could not remember ever to have heard Bob tell a foul story; even at his worst and lowest, even drunk and lying in the gutter, there had always been a



kind of decency about Bob. It must be mental, seeing that it could be neither moral nor physical; but could a man's mind be clean, when soul and body were so debased? While he was considering this paradox, Bob began to speak again.

"Just as soon as you're up and have had your breakfast, Van, there's something I'd like to talk to you about," he said, with an earnestness that sat strangely on him who was by nature so irresponsible; "I've read those letters from Lorrie and Father—I can't make 'em out—they're so solemn and mysterious, begging me to do my duty, and come home with you, and all that, just as if they expected I'd make a row about it. What would I be doing *that* for? I'd just as soon go home as not. I've seen all I want to. Lorrie's letter is all wild and hysterical anyhow—poor girl! She's about heart broken." The ready tears came into Bob's eyes. "Why, of *course* I'm coming home with you. I'd go back on Lorrie's account anyhow. She wants to know all about Cort." Bob's face grew grave again. He fingered the letters which were spread open on his knees. "There's something else I've got to tell you—to ask you about, I mean. It's important. But you go ahead and get freshened up first. There's coffee; shan't I get you some coffee?"

Van Cleve thought reluctantly: "It's come! He's going to own up the whole thing to me!" Aloud he said, "No, never mind the coffee, Bob, let's have it out now. Might as well tell me and get it done and over with."

The other hung his head, fumbling with the letters. "It—it's not so easy, Van," he said huskily; "if it were just about myself, I wouldn't mind, but it's somebody else—another person, you know—"

Van Cleve thought it the part of wisdom, perhaps the best kindness, not to help him out with any hint of understanding; an honest confession is good for the

soul. He waited ; and, at last, seeing that Bob seemed unable to get a step farther, said casually ; "Is that Lorrie's letter you've got there ? I've written already to tell her we are starting home."

"No, no, these are Cort's. The ones I was going to take to Lorrie, you know. This was my first chance to look them over," Bob said ; and noting surprise on his friend's face, he added quickly and defensively : "why, I *had* to read them, you know, Van ; I had to find out what weren't worth taking to her, so I could destroy them. We haven't got any room to be carrying letters around, and I thought there was no use taking her a lot of laundry bills and things like that."

"All right — I understand," said Van, almost amused.

"I wouldn't read other people's letters unless I had to," said Bob, hotly.

"To be sure, it's a point of honor," Van Cleve agreed in his driest tone ; and as the other looked at him, puzzled, he said harshly : "go on, Bob, what is it you want to tell me ? Go on, man ! No use shilly-shallying. Everything always gets known first or last anyhow."

"Why, Van Cleve, you — you act as if — you talk as if you knew — or as if you suspected something already !" Bob stammered, aghast.

"I know about you and Paula Jameson, if that's what you're trying to tell me," said Van Cleve, out of patience.

At the sound of that name, an unhealthy flush invaded the unhealthy pallor of Bob's face ; but he was silent, staring at his friend unseeingly. Van judged him to be stupefied with astonishment at the sudden uncovering of the disgrace. Shame, regret, alarm, a dozen feelings Van thought he could read in the other's changing and confused expression.

"That's what your father and Lorrie meant by the way they wrote, Bob," he said, poignantly ashamed himself, and hurrying through his explanations ; "that's

the real reason I'm here after you. Lorrie would have come by herself, only I stopped her — I made her stay at Tampa. Everything's come out. It was bound to come out from the start. I — I don't exactly blame you, Bob — I mean I don't think you're utterly lost and abandoned because you and she — the girl, you know — sort of let go of yourselves — it was foolish, but it — it —" Van Cleve floundered a moment, confused at the inadequacy of his own words — "it's all got to be straightened out, anyhow. They want you to go home and marry her and make it up to her the best you can —" he halted, struck by a sudden doubt that Bob had understood all that he said, or even heard it all. The abruptness of the attack (to call it that) seemed to have a little dazed him.

"You know all about me and Paula Jameson?" Bob repeated, as if nothing after that had conveyed any meaning to him.

"Yes, *you* and Paula Jameson." Van Cleve went all over what he had already said, with more deliberation and insistence; as he talked he noticed with anxiety that Bob's features faded gradually to a leaden hue, lips and all. "I ought to be careful. He looks like a corpse!" thought Van, frightened, and broke off. "Are you — are you all right, Bob? You — you don't — you aren't going to be sick?" he stammered.

Bob put up his hand to his forehead. "I'm all right," he said vaguely.

"You *had* to know, and I *had* to tell you. Nobody can ever dodge anything like that. It'll come out some day in spite of you. You might have known that, Bob," Van Cleve reiterated.

"I — I suppose so." However much Bob had been startled, he did not faint nor go into some kind of fit, as his friend had momentarily feared; neither, to Van's infinite relief, did he begin a clamorous denial of guilt. Rather he seemed to be painfully adjusting his mind to

a comprehensive view of the situation. And at last he said: "Who told you?"

Van Cleve told him. He described all the circumstances, as he had seen them, leading up to the unhappy disclosure; and how he himself came to bear some part in it. Bob listened to him with an extraordinary immobility; he did not give the impression of being callous or indifferent; on the contrary, he appeared to Van Cleve to be bending his whole energies merely to understanding the story. He interrupted only once when he asked: "Did you see Paula? Did she tell *you*?"

"*Me!* No!" ejaculated Van Cleve, horrified; "she wouldn't be talking to me about it. I hope to the Lord the poor girl doesn't know I've got a thing to do with it! No, as I understood it, she didn't want to blame anybody, but her mother got it out of her somehow."

He went on talking; and at the end, although Van had pictured as forcibly as he could the attitude of the family, which was surely also the attitude of every right-minded person, Robert said, with the same questioning air as before: —

"They want me to marry her?"

"Why, good God, Bob, what else? That's the only way you can square things. You know what the world is. You know how it would treat that girl, even if any decent person would ever speak to *you* afterwards. You can't let her pay the score all by herself. That's not fair. And, Bob, I know you're fair; I know you'll always take what's coming to you. I told you before, I don't blame the whole of it on *you*. There's a lot of rot talked about men deceiving girls, and taking advantage of their innocence, and all that. It's a partnership business, in my opinion — six of one, half a dozen of the other. But that doesn't let you off. You — you see there's going to be a child,

Bob — I suppose you didn't take that in while I was talking just now, but that's what's the main trouble. Of course you couldn't know that."

"Yes, I knew it. I guessed at it, that is," said Bob, looking down, sorting his letters out and bundling them together again, first in one packet, then in another, with mechanical movements.

"What? Before you went away?"

"No, not before I went away."

"She must have written to him," Van Cleve thought, with a mixture of pity and disgust; and for the first time he looked at the other in pure contempt. Faugh, the sorry creature that Bob was! "Well, then, you see you've got to come home, Bob," he said.

"I — I wish I could see Lorrie — I wish Lorrie was here!" said Bob, weakly.

Van Cleve got up with an oath. "By —! Bob Gilbert, you make me sick!" he said savagely. "*Lorrie!* You brought this shameful trouble on yourself, and now you want to go whining to Lorrie and load her up with it. *Lorrie!* Hasn't she got enough to stand already? The man she loved is dead, shot down and buried like a dog in this God-forsaken hole, and the best you can do for her is to wish she were here to help *you* out! Hasn't she done enough for you, you that she's dragged out of the gutters, and defended, and cared for and prayed over all her life? If she *were* here, you know very well she'd want you to do the right thing, the decent thing. Oh, Bob, be a man for once! Don't have us all bolstering you up, and helping you along. Stand on your own feet; think of somebody besides yourself. You *know* what's right; then do it because it's right, not because Lorrie or some of the rest of us tell you to!"

"I know — I know! I'm going to! I know I don't amount to much, but I'll try to do the right thing this time — I'm trying to, Van Cleve," said Bob, pitifully.

"I was just thinking about Lorrie. I want to help her, I don't want to put any more on her — honestly I do, Van — I want to be good to Lorrie. She's the best sister that ever was, and it's just as you say, she's stood a lot for me. I ought to spare Lorrie. You don't need to talk any more, Van, I'm going to do it."

He spoke pleadingly, but Van Cleve's flare of anger was over, and he was already ashamed of it; when he looked at the other's stricken face, his heart smote him. "Well, then, you come along home with me, and make it all straight, if you're so anxious to be good to Lorrie," he said gruffly. "Here, Bob, you look kind of fagged, you'd better stretch out over here in the shade of the deck house, on my blanket. I'll make a pillow out of the coat."

Bob submitted; he gave Van Cleve a glance of affectionate understanding, not without a spark of his old sweet-tempered mischief. "Oh, you old grouch, you!" he said, thumping the other a weak blow on the back, and collapsed in one of his spasms of coughing. The letters which he was still holding flew out of his hand, scattering about the decks, and Van Cleve gathered them up and brought them to him. He was surprised at the haste and eagerness with which Robert, even in the middle of his coughing, snatched at them and crammed them away in his pockets. "Did you see any of those?" he asked with unwonted sharpness, when he had recovered breath.

"What? To read, you mean? Why, no. I didn't look. I don't want to know what's in other people's letters any more than you do, you know," Van Cleve said with an effort at lightness.

This was all or nearly all that passed between the two on the subject of Bob's marriage; that painful chapter was closed, and by tacit agreement neither one of them referred to it again, except once, when they

were nearing Tampa on their return, and this last chapter, too, of trials and adventures was all but ended. Van Cleve's conscience, which had never been at ease on one point, prompted him to say, with some diffidence: "See here, Bob, there's one thing I ought to say. I don't want to be unjust to you. But I don't want to be unjust to — to this girl either. That poor woman, her mother — that poor Mrs. Jameson is — is all *right*, I know *that*. But I — well, I don't know anything about the daughter. I've seen her running around the streets late at night with another man, in a carriage, you know — his arm around her — and all that. I say I don't want to be unjust to her, and the fix she's in now, you can't blame her for wanting to get out of by any kind of hook or crook. But if you've got any reason to think you're being made a convenience of — ?"

"I said I was going to marry her. So you'd better not talk any more, Van Cleve," said Bob. And Van Cleve, glancing into his face, was silenced.

## PART III

### CHAPTER I

#### IN WHICH WE RETURN TO OUR MUTTON

THE next time I saw Van Cleve Kendrick was in the fall of that year, some months after his Cuban vacation trip, of which we had all heard during the summer with a mild wonder and curiosity. It seemed a bizarre sort of recreation for him to take. Van was notoriously absorbed in work; his bank, his Building Association, his string of plain, respectable clients with their small affairs and savings had hitherto furnished him with all the entertainment he appeared to want, and he had not been known to display the slightest interest in the Cubans, nor, for that matter, in our own picturesque and brave endeavors on their behalf. If anything, he had rather disapproved of the latter. That he should have deliberately chosen to spend his first leisure time in years amongst the discomforts and (for all we knew) the genuine horrors of the war, was a queer development. But the lure of adventure is strange and lays hold of the most unpromising subjects in the most unexpected ways. After all, Van Cleve was a young man, though nobody ever thought of him as young; he was in reality no older than that poor young Cortwright that Lorrie Gilbert had been engaged to or than her brother Bob, and it had not seemed anything out-of-the-way for them to go. Poor fellows, neither one had got much of a vacation out of it!



As for Van Cleve, it had undeniably done him good. At the end of four or five weeks, he was back on our streets again, burned dark as an Indian — whom, indeed, with his high cheek bones and flat chin, he not a little resembled — lean, wiry, and hard-muscled, evidently in the best of health. The National Loan and Savings welcomed him with an enthusiasm that astonished the young fellow, and no doubt secretly pleased him a good deal, although he was far too proud to show it. They all said they had missed him; Schlactmann — who had fairly made up his mind to resign at last, and would leave for Flagstaff, Arizona, the first of the year — shook his hand and said with some significance that he would take his rest easier now he felt confident the work would be done right in the office; old Mr. Burgstaller came and complimented Van's appearance, and asked naïve questions about Cuba. The old German women beamed on him from outside the brass cage-work, and one of them actually brought in a bag of rich little cookies — "*Blitz-küchen*, Hilda, she make 'em for Mr. Kendrick," she said, nodding and smiling; and Van Cleve, who in the last ten years had seen Hilda grow from a flaxen-pigtailed youngster, coming around every Saturday night with the family savings folded in a scrap of newspaper — the *Volksblatt* — and pinned inside her blue woollen dress, to a buxom, dashing young woman, chewing gum and wearing the latest fashion in Eton jackets, pumps, and sailor hats, Van Cleve grinned answeringly and took the offering with a sudden warming of his own heart. Perhaps he was not quite so hard as he looked, or as he fancied himself.

Yet, on the other hand, he was not at all impressed by the attentions of Mr. Gebhardt, although that kind and sentimental patron made almost as much of him on the occasion of this return as if Van Cleve had been his own son. The younger man inwardly and against his own will distrusted that very kindness and that very

sentiment ; he really liked his superior, but he would have liked him better without so much petting from him. The president of the bank invited his assistant book-keeper out to dinner at his great, cool, rich, beautifully ordered house on Adams Road, overlooking the golf links, with the gables and chimneys of other similarly rich and great homes showing charmingly in the spacious landscape of lawns and trees roundabout ; Mr. Gebhardt's family of ladies were gone east for the summer to their cottage at Watch Hill (to Van's relief), but the gentlemen dined handsomely and formally and had their coffee on the terrace as usual ; and the banker talked with a flattering confidence to his young friend about affairs at the National, and about Van's own affairs, and was so genial, companionable, and unreserved, so unaffectedly pleased with and friendly to Van Cleve, that the latter's conscience rebuked him.

"It's all right, he means it — at least, he means it *now* — every word of it. I needn't think that I'm so important, anyhow, that he feels he's got to get on the good side of me !" thought Van, shrewdly ; "it's just Mr. Gebhardt's way. He makes the same fuss over Schlactmann, over nearly everybody. I've seen him do it so often, I suppose it's cheapened it. But he can't help being expansive and emotional ; he acts as if you were the best friend he's got in the world, because that's the way he really feels for the moment. Probably he's as sincere as most of us. People fool themselves sometimes. Only I wish he hadn't started in to be so thick and confidential with me ; people always dislike you when they realize they've been too confidential with you —" from which it will be seen that Mr. Kendrick had no idea of presuming on his employer's indiscretions. No, Van Cleve appeared in the offices of the bank exactly as before, a steady and efficient young man with a tolerably sane and just estimate of his own value. That may have been one of the reasons that Mr. Gebhardt

never appeared to regret — as the other had feared — his frankness with his subordinate; he was constantly and profusely kind after the same manner. He was forever inviting Van to dinner nowadays; he had him playing billiards at his own expensive club; he even urged the young man to give up his boarding-house and come out to Adams Road for the rest of the heated term — there was the whole big, comfortable place — the garden full of fruit and vegetables going to waste — such quantities of milk and cream and fresh eggs that Mr. Gebhardt had caught one of the men selling these goods in a poorer suburban settlement near by — there were the servants and horses with practically nothing to do, and so on, and so on. Van declined, however — “It’s a good way out on the Hill, you know, and supposing I got stalled on the cars some morning coming down town —” he suggested clumsily; and Gebhardt, with some good-natured remonstrances, abandoned his persuasions. The banker had not reached his present age and position in the world without some study of his fellow-man; and whether he was surprised, or offended, or merely amused at Van Cleve’s stiff-necked refusal to be made a favorite of, he did not allow it to show.

As I was saying, it was some time late in the fall when I myself first met Mr. Kendrick; and then one Sunday afternoon, I encountered him, of all places in the world, at the Art Museum in Paradise Park, a place in the which, as is usual with all public monuments, a place to they may be, no native ever goes unless with some visiting stranger. It would have been impossible to imagine the Van Cleve diverting himself there, at any rate, and, in point of fact, he was not. He looked more bored, standing about with folded arms, and a catalogue of the Society of Western Artists, and a catalogue of pictures were on exhibition at the time — whose hand. There was a crowd; but Van, being a tall man and occupied in gazing around anywhere but a

the pictures, caught sight of me very soon, and nodded with his habitual short civility which so often antagonized people. Nevertheless, I went up and spoke to him, taking care not to refer to Cuba, by the way; he must have wearied of that topic by now. I asked him if Miss Lucas had a painting there, not being able to account for his presence otherwise.

He said she had; he had just found it; she had wanted him to go and see it. It was the landscape or sea-view over there, No. 270 — let's see, what did she call it? He unrumpled his catalogue, and, consulting it, announced that the title was "The Beach: Pass Christian, Mississippi." "They're down there, you know," he told me casually.

Number 270 was hung on the line, if you please; and we went and looked at it with great respect. "I suppose it must be pretty good, or she couldn't have got it in. I don't know much about pictures myself," said Van Cleve, impartially.

"Did you say Mrs. Van Cleve and the family are living there? I thought —"

"Yes. They were in New York for a while, but they wanted to try the South this winter. Do you happen to have seen Miss Gilbert? She was coming to-day —" again his eyes roved.

It took some self-command not to smile at that. Of course Van Cleve had come to see his cousin's painting hanging (on the line!) in this honorable company — oh, of course! And, without a doubt, it was pure coincidence that Miss Gilbert should chance to be visiting the Museum that very day — oh, without a doubt! The fact is, everybody knew about Van Cleve Kendrick and Lorrie Gilbert. Everybody had been saying for months past — ever since that tragic event in the beginning of the Cuban campaign, indeed — that it seemed rather dreadful to look at it that way, but Lorrie had in all probability made a very lucky escape from

that marriage. There had always been more or less talk about Cortwright, not all of it true, of course, but still —. He was just the sort of handsome, dashing, dissipated young fellow that seems to have a disastrous attraction for nice girls — the nicer they are, the more likely to throw themselves away on Cortwrights. There might have been something in him — one couldn't tell — he had died in a fine way. But had he lived, it was a question how the match would have turned out. At all events, as long as the poor fellow was gone, why, it might be a heartless thing to say, but we hoped Lorrie would get over it and give Van Kendrick a chance.

She came into the picture-gallery — it was the room where the big canvas of "John Huss and his Followers" hangs — at that moment, with her father and another gentleman about his age; a striking, conspicuous person, very high and wide, and by his gait or looks somehow reminding one a little of Daniel Webster and a little of Buffalo Bill; and he had a slouch hat, and buckskin gauntlet-gloves, and a large, red, purple, handsome, coarse old face. He was so incongruous a figure to be associated with the stooping old professor with his neat, gray side-whiskers and his antique silk hat, peering near-sightedly at the pictures and, to tell the truth, leaning pretty heavily on the cane which the doorkeeper, out of a good-hearted consideration for his years, had allowed him to retain — I say the swaggering elderly d'Artagnan was so much of a fish out of water that at the first glance I supposed he had simply happened to enter at the same time, with the rest of the crowd. But now he was speaking to Lorrie; and when we reached them, Professor Gilbert had got him camped before "John Huss," and was delivering a little lecture on the life and teachings of that eminent theologian — "Archbishop Sbinko in 1410 denounced Huss to the Pope — Alexander V, if I remember correctly — as a Wickliffite —" we heard.

"Ah — hum — a *which*, did you say, Professor?" asked the other.

"A Wickliffite — a follower of John de Wickliffe, sir. There can be no doubt, I think, that Huss was greatly influenced by his writings. The similarity of his conclusions to the argument set forth by Wickliffe in the *Trialogues* proves it to my mind," said the Professor, earnestly; I daresay he thought in all simplicity that the subject was deeply interesting to his guest and that an intimate acquaintance with Wickliffe was part of every ordinarily liberal education. "However, it was not until some four or five years later that Sigismund of Bohemia —" he went on talking, while the other listened vaguely with one eye upon a mammoth painting at the end of the room exhibiting a baker's dozen of nude nymphs circling about a nude young faun with a flute, in the midst of an Arcadian landscape — some Western artist's idea of "Spring," according to the catalogue. I had time to whisper to Van Cleve and ask him who was the man with the Gilberts, did he know?

"Oh, yes; he's a Judge Cortwright from Maysville. Phil Cortwright's father, you know. He's been up here staying with them for two or three days. Lorrie said they were going to bring him here to-day. They've been taking him around, of course."

That explained him. And it was a little disquieting to reflect that Philip himself might have grown to be just such another as this terrible old lewd-eyed satyr of a parent. When we were introduced, I was aware of a kind of halo of bourbon about him; he carried his own especial atmosphere, like the Olympians. To be sure, the poor Gilberts were no strangers to that, after their years of sad experience with that good-for-nothing son; but what did they think of the Judge? What did Lorrie think of her Philip's father? The girl spoke to us with her usual brightness; Lorrie always had a

spirited way, and she was looking as pretty as ever, if a little thin. The Judge eyed her almost too appreciatively, I thought; but indeed he eyed all the women too appreciatively. The whole thing was rather funny and rather pitiable; that nice, scholarly old gentleman expounding about John Huss, and the other leering around at all the young girls, and at the canvases and classic marbles in which he saw only the nakedness and nothing of the beauty. "That's a very fine painting, the large one, with the — er — shepherdesses and so on in the pasture, eh?" he interrupted Professor Gilbert, as the latter was innocently perorating; and he directed Van Cleve's attention to the "Spring," with a sidelong grin and a swift flicker of one eyelid, which I suppose he thought none of the rest of us saw. Van gave the picture a matter-of-fact survey and grunted.

"I don't know much about pictures," he repeated; "Evelyn's got one here, Lorrie. I told you, didn't I?" And once more we all walked over and solemnly viewed Miss Lucas's exhibit, Judge Cortwright struggling with a yawn, and the professor looking dimly ill at ease.

"Is Judge Cortwright here for any length of time?" I asked him.

"Well, for as long as we can keep him, of course," said Professor Gilbert, whose Virginia standards of hospitality would never have allowed him to utter the most remote hint of any guest's departure. "He came up from Maysville only last Wednesday. To be frank, madame, I feared he would find it rather dull at our house, he is used to what Mr. Roosevelt has called in his book the 'strenuous life' — much more strenuous than ours at any rate. My own activities are confined to daily hammering a little of the humanities into a number of young people, half of whom forget what I have told them the next day and the other half get it all wrong!" said Mr. Gilbert, not without a touch of mild humor. "As I say, I was afraid Judge Cortwright

wouldn't find it very interesting, but Van Cleve, who is quite a man of the world, has been kindly helping us out. He has taken the Judge to his club and to places in the evening, you understand."

I did understand. And it struck me that both the Professor and his daughter were very thankful to resign their visitor to Van Cleve's care and leadership; Lorrie dropped behind with me, too, as we strolled through the rooms. I asked, with as casual an air as I could command, how Bob was.

"Why, he's doing very well now, thanks — very much improved. It must be wonderful, that climate. The doctors said he couldn't get well here, you know. But Bob says they tell him now that he'll probably be able to come home in the spring."

"Is it Colorado Springs where he's staying?"

"No, Boulder."

I made some banal remark about it's being very hard on a man to have to give up work on account of his health, etc. A piece of hypocrisy, but what would you have? I must say something, for silence itself would have been an awkward comment. The Gilberts knew that we knew why Bob's health had failed; that he had been drinking it away for years, and that as for work, he had scarcely done a hand's turn in his whole life. They knew; yet still we kept up our poor, well-meant pretences, as is our habit in this world; and upon my word, we do many righteous things that are less admirable!

"Yes, it must be hard," Lorrie said, playing her part of the game pluckily; "but even if Bob can't ever come back to this climate, he can always get something to do out there, you know. He says he's going to look around as soon as he's well enough." She paused, and then said, rather diffidently, and not looking at me, "You knew about his being married?"

"About the wedding? Oh, yes. It made quite a



excitement, you know. We were all very much interested."

"Were *you* surprised?"

"Well, not so very much. It had been going on for a good while, hadn't it? I never heard of your brother being attentive to anybody else." I should not have liked to tell her all the comments that had come to my own ears. The least unkind one had been from somebody who said that the affair was like what you sometimes read in obituary notices, "*. . . Linger- ing, but very sudden at the last!*" Some one else remarked that it was astonishing that any one could have "nailed Bob Gilbert down 'for keeps' to anything." And there had been considerable wonder expressed that Miss Jame- son should have taken so much trouble and displayed so much perseverance to capture *him*, when half the effort would probably have landed her ten times as good a match. Of course the Gilberts were one of the F. F. V.'s, but Paula was as *common* as she could be, and what good would a First Family of Virginia do her?

I said to Lorrie, meaning to show an amiable inter- est: "It's getting to be very swagger to be married at your summer home, or at Bar Harbor or The Hot, isn't it? I noticed that the Jamesons were in the country. Was it a pretty wedding?"

"It was very quiet," said Lorrie, looking down and stroking and patting her muff nervously; "they — they wanted it to be quiet. There weren't any cards or invitations or anything. They just had the notice put in the paper. They wanted it to be quiet."

"Well, that was very sensible, considering that Bob wasn't really well," said I, hastily and awkwardly. I felt as if the subject were not a safe one, even though Lorrie herself had opened it. Her manner was strained and unnatural; and Professor Gilbert stood by, si- lently fumbling and pulling at his old worn gloves, in visible discomfort. The family must have disliked

Robert's choice of a wife even more than Society-at-large had suspected; it was plainly as much as they could do to put a good face on the matter. And it must be allowed that Society-at-large sympathized with them. "Did they — I suppose they went at once to Colorado?" I blundered along. "It's very nice for you to know that he has a wife with him. And it keeps him from being lonesome, too."

"Yes. No. That is — Robert's wife is not with him —" the father began hesitatingly.

"Not with him *just now*, of course, Papa means," Lorrie broke in; and she went on to talk in a hurried, sprightly way, still quite unlike her own, until Van Cleve and the judge, having made the round of the rooms, came up to us. I never found out where Bob's wife was; upon comparing notes with other mutual acquaintances, it developed that nobody knew where she was, except that she was not with Bob, and not here in town, neither she nor her mother. That must have been a relief to the Gilberts, at any rate.

## CHAPTER II

### IN WHICH MR. KENDRICK PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN

CERTAIN kind-hearted persons professed to think it highly reprehensible for the Van Cleves to have packed off to New York or wherever else they chose, leaving behind the worthiest member of the family, homeless, and exposed to the temptations which, as everybody knows, beset the paths of lonesome young men in boarding-houses. However, Van never showed any signs of deterioration under this neglect; he was an exemplary boarder, quiet and punctual. In his bachelor apartment there was the oak "bedroom-set" that had always been his when he lived at home, beginning to look shabby now, though still substantial; there was J. Van Cleve's strong-box stored away on the top shelf of the cupboard; there was a sectional bookcase that Van had bought himself with some of the first spare money he had ever made; it took thirty dollars, and sometimes when his eyes fell on it, Van Cleve recalled with amusement the struggle he had had between it and a bicycle, which was the secret desire of his cramped boyish heart. He had made up his mind to the bookcase, he remembered, because it would never need repairs, devastating expenditures for tools, tire-tape, and so forth; he was afraid that he could not afford the upkeep of a bicycle! On the mantelpiece there stood a yellowing old photograph of his grandmother taken years ago when her hair was still black, very alert and handsome in an elegant sacque and open ruffled sleeves and chignon, and holding on her lap a fat lump of a baby in a blur of white

embroideries, with no visible expression on its dough-faced face, though Mrs. Van Cleve always declared that it was the brightest and most beautiful child ever seen, to wit: Van Cleve himself at the age of nine months. Young Kendrick, who was fond of his grandmother, had a sort of laughing affection for this thing; he was at heart rather proud of his good-looking, spirited, well-bred women, even when he felt that they needed a harder hand held over them. Latterly, he had begun to perceive the moral of a story his grandmother had once told him about Joshua's refusal to buy her a carpet — a body-brussels carpet for the best bedroom on which she had set her heart. "Your grandfather said up and down he would *not* let me get it; he said he wasn't going to spend money for a new carpet when the old one was plenty good enough. And you know it really was, only I was tired of it, and this other was so pretty. But what do you think I did, Van? I just made up my mind I'd have that carpet in spite of him; and I went to work and saved up the money bit by bit out of my allowance that he gave me to dress myself with. It cost fifty-eight dollars, too; but it was splendid quality and lasted for years. I always liked that carpet better than any other in the house," Mrs. Joshua concluded pensively, all unconscious, for her part, of the moral.

Of course we were all used to the Van Cleves, but when people who knew them as well as this writer heard about that Pass Christian move, it was quite impossible to keep from laughing. Where to next? The family had tried the South before without conspicuous success, but the New Orleans and Palatka orange-grove episodes appeared now to be entirely forgotten! All at once New York City and its vicinity became utterly unbearable. The cost of living was exorbitant. They could not afford a servant in New York, and in the country no servant would stay. The water and air in the city

were contaminated by every germ known to medical science; the outlying towns — half a dozen of which they had tried — were abhorrent with a population of commuters and suburbanites comparable for noisomeness to the germs. It was imperatively necessary for them to go to some small, quiet place in a mild climate where life would be simple, and where at the same time they could have congenial society, *good* society, not unspeakable vulgarians of commuters, forever rushing for the trains with their parcels and their babies, with their dreadful neighborhood clubs and gossip; and not the questionable occupants of New York apartment houses, either, where you never knew who might be living across the hall, and you wouldn't like to be seen going up and down in the elevator with some of them. Ashville, Pensacola, San Antonio, were discussed and dismissed in turn, in favor of Pass Christian on the Gulf. Living, of course, was cheap there; you didn't have to heat the houses, and your garden was constantly full of fruits and vegetables; they had, as usual, obtained voluminous statistics from hosts of perfectly reliable persons. As to society, the large hotels were likewise full all winter of charming people who went down there for rest and recreation, and to whom Evelyn could give painting-lessons. Mrs. Lucas and her daughter covered reams of paper writing out these incontrovertible arguments; Van Cleve did not take the trouble to read the fourth of it. He was very busy and had no time to thresh the subject out with them, even if they would have listened to him. What it all boiled down to — as he told himself with a passing irritation — was that they had got one of their periodic attacks of restlessness again.

"Dear Aunt Myra," he wrote, "your letter of the 15th rec'd. I can't make the trip to Montclair, New Jersey, merely to talk over your plan as you suggest, because having been away for a month last summer, I don't feel

like asking for another leave so soon ; and the changes at the bank have piled the work up considerably. Besides, it would hardly be worth the time and expense, as I already understand what you want to do, and talking wouldn't make it any clearer. I suppose you might as well go to Pass Christian, as you don't seem able to find anything satisfactory where you are. Enclosed find New York draft for the \$250.

"Tell Evie that I am glad to hear people admire her pictures so much, and hope she will sell some of them to good advantage. Love to all, as ever,

"V. C. KENDRICK."

So the change was made ; and you may be sure the Van Cleve ladies kept within their appointed sum of money ; they all had a clever, bargaining streak, and in their own way were good managers, never wasting, and never owing any tradesman a penny. What with taste and ingenuity and their peculiar distinction of appearance, which they contrived to impart to all their surroundings, they made a better showing than many who had ten times the income. Mr. Gebhardt, who took his family down to the Mardi-Gras and to some of the Gulf resorts that winter, and some others of our people who were there and saw the Van Cleves, came back with enthusiastic accounts of their charming little bungalow, furnished so artistically with things they had picked up and with Evelyn's pictures. They themselves wrote glowingly to Van Cleve about the balmy weather in January, the unfailing sea-breeze, the drives, the boating and bathing, the delightful society. Of course, there was a great deal of money and display at the big hotels, and the little ones were generally crowded with excursionists, land-boomers' conventions, hunting and fishing men, and United Order of Owls on an outing. But the cottagers were lovely, and even the hotels served a purpose. Evelyn held an exhibition at the Sea-View

House, which was jammed, and everybody went perfectly wild over the pictures. It cost a good deal, as they charged a mountainous rent for the room (the hotel keepers were all robbers), and then there was the cost of printing the catalogues, which had a cover that the artist designed and lettered herself, the quaintest, brightest thing, everybody simply grabbed one for a souvenir. She was positively overwhelmed with compliments, and it was rather funny, so many people, after seeing the catalogues, wanted her to design place-cards and favors for them. She had to tell them — of course she did it tactfully so as not to offend anybody — that she never did anything like that, but there were plenty of shops where those little things could be got, or even done to order by hack-workers. The idea! Evelyn with her talents and artistic education and the name she had made for herself! They wouldn't have dreamed of asking Parrish or Gibson to do it. But the general public isn't very appreciative of real art; they only notice whatever is tremendously advertised.

Miss Lucas sold one picture, "Moonlight on the Bayou." Julius Gebhardt, Esq., bought it, and I remember to have seen it hanging in the Gebhardt drawing-room — a pretty scene of live-oaks, Spanish moss, night-shadows, a mystic trail of light in the flat pools, and so forth. "He was so dear about it, so much interested, and I believe would have given me any price I asked," Evelyn wrote to Van Cleve afterwards. "We all love Mr. Gebhardt. I can't say as much for the rest of them. Natalie is a cat, and the others just big, plain, slow creatures, dressed like servant-girls out for Sunday. But Mr. Gebhardt is a splendid character, so strong and trustworthy, and with it all has so much fun in him. You ought to have seen the merry little twinkle in his eye when he said to me: 'Why, you can hear the frogs croak in that swamp!' And he said beautiful things about you, Van. Grandma was so

touched she cried. He said that you had the most wonderful brain for finance he had ever come across. He as good as told us he meant to advance you to the very highest position in the bank. 'If he ever needs money for any purpose, I hope he will not hesitate to come to me. I would do anything I could to help him.' Those were his exact words, so you see I haven't exaggerated. . . . The water here is as hard as nails, it makes your skin feel like a nutmeg-grater, really a dreadful drawback to this ideal spot. . . ."

Van Cleve read the whole of this letter, as it happened, in an off hour; and laid it down with a curious look on his face, as he thoughtfully rubbed one hand up the back of his head. "I give 'em six months," he mentally remarked, and he read again all that rhapsody about Mr. Gebhardt with a renewal of his queer expression. The fact was, his promotion had already come; already he was occupying Schlactmann's ancient post, and within a year, after the election when, Mr. Gebhardt had privately informed him, they meant if possible to persuade old Mr. O'Rourke to retire from the board of directors, Van Cleve was to have that seat too.

"Between you and me, O'Rourke is entirely too old," Van's chief said confidentially; "he's not competent to manage any kind of business any more. But the poor old fellow clings to his position here so, that you can't help feeling it's brutal to turn him out. He *won't* resign, and so far he's been perfectly impervious to hints," said the kind-hearted gentleman, with a rueful smile; "so I suppose it's up to us to drop him, as gently as we can. We have a rule here, as you know, that each one of the directors shall own at least twenty-five shares. But if that over-sizes you a little, why, I expect it can be arranged. Any of us would be willing to carry you, I myself, for that matter —" Nobody, in short, could have been kinder, or declared in warmer terms his belief in his young friend's uprightness and business ability



than the President of the National Loan ; and one might have looked for Van to show some gratification at this recognition, even to have been decorously elated over his prospects. On the contrary, Mr. Kendrick went about his work with the same dour energy as before, no more gay nor agreeable than he had ever been. The duties of his new position must have weighed heavily on him, or else his private cares, for he was very thoughtful and absorbed those days.

No small amount of water has gone under the bridges since then, and Van Cleve has changed a good deal ; by my count, he must be nearly forty years of age at the present date of nineteen hundred and twelve ; but he has looked forty ever since he was twenty-five, so that now, for an oddity, he seems younger rather than older ! And it was with a start that I heard him the other day allude to the time when he was "a young fellow at the National Loan and Savings Bank" ; that organization has been dead and buried so long, as we measure nowadays. Yet, as I say, Van has changed a good deal ; he is much more genial and companionable than he used to be ; he takes life easier, possibly because it *is* easier than when he was a hard, silent, care-laden boy, driving himself to the limit. Once in a while, he will even cast back to that time, not with any soft feeling of pity or sympathy for that earlier self, but in a mood of tolerance, wonder, and perhaps a little complacence. "I had one of those chances that come to a man once in a lifetime, and I knew it too, but I didn't have the courage to take advantage of it," he said to me on this same occasion, with a trace of the humorous pride he might have taken in the exploits of a son. And he told me about it. Van Cleve has never learned the art of polite small-talk ; he will not change in that respect if he lives to be a hundred, and this anecdote represents his notion of conversation with a lady. "It was back in ninety-six," he said. "You remember the Demo-

cratic National Convention that year? Remember the 'crown of thorns and cross of gold'?" And, glancing at me and seeing that I had assumed the terrier-like attitude of intelligent listening which is cultivated by women for such emergencies, he went on: "Yes, but what you probably don't remember or may not have known at the time is that the stock market was very uneasy just then. Standard Oil went back from three hundred and something to less than two hundred. I think it was down to a hundred and seventy at one time. I was a young fellow at the bank then; I had been there four or five years, and I had four hundred dollars saved up; and ordinarily I'd have thought of buying on the stock market about as soon as I'd have thought of buying the Mammoth Cave for a speculation. But after I read that Chicago speech, I said to myself: 'This fellow is either another Abraham Lincoln, or — or he isn't. Now he's going to make a speech in New York, and we'll find out.' Well, he went to New York and he made the speech, do you remember? At Madison Square Garden, I believe; and I went out and got a copy of the paper the minute it was out, and read it."

"Well?" said I, a little at sea, as he paused. I do not know much about politics or the stock market, one or the other, and for the life of me cannot understand the connection there seems to be between them.

"Well, he wasn't Abraham Lincoln," said Van Cleve, with a slight smile; "I rushed off and telegraphed to a fellow I knew that had gone from here to Dominick & Dominick in New York, to buy me Standard Oil at anything under two hundred. But as quick as I was, I wasn't quick enough. It had jumped already. He telegraphed back: '*S. O. 210. Advise immediately.*' And there —" Van Cleve said with a kind of smiling regret, "*there* is where I got cold feet. I ought to have telegraphed in the first place to buy at the market, but I didn't have the nerve. I gave up. I was just

a young fellow, you know, and four hundred dollars was all I had in the world, and there were people depending on me. I had a good hunch, but I didn't have the nerve." He shook his head; and I preserved my look of intelligence, though inwardly unable to see the slightest relation between Standard Oil and Mr. Bryan's New York speech!

The story, however, vindicated, in some degree, those alarmists who are eternally bewailing the decadence of the race; some of us are certainly greatly fallen off from the strength and daring of our ancestors. It would not have been old Joshua Van Cleve, for an example, whose courage would have failed him; *he* would never have got "cold feet." By just such masterstrokes, undoubtedly, did Joshua accumulate his fortune. It is true that he was not, at Van Cleve's age, hampered by Van Cleve's responsibilities; but very likely he would not have taken them so seriously.

Joshua and the brussels-carpet story must have recurred to Van Cleve frequently and forcibly that winter, as he sat beneath the stare of the baby in the photograph, with the letters from Pass Christian on the table. His family would have been surprised and shocked could they have known what was passing through that wonderful brain for finance. The letters multiplied amazingly as the spring advanced. Van heard in succession that the ceaseless wind, at first so grateful, had begun to get on their nerves; then that the place had suddenly filled up with flashy people from Pittsburgh, Memphis, and elsewhere, who did nothing but drink highballs and wear diamonds, and amongst whom it would be useless (in fact, impossible!) for Evelyn to look for either pupils or purchasers; then that they had had a terrifying cloud-burst; then that the price of everything had gone up until it was as bad as in New York; and for a climax, as summer came on, that the town was all but deserted, the heat

and dampness absolutely tropical, the moonlight so intolerably brilliant that nobody could sleep at night, and that there was grave danger to northern people, who were invariably the first victims, from yellow fever, which was liable to break out there at any time !

Over this last item, Mr. Kendrick knotted his brows in some slight worry ; he had paid very little heed to the other complaints, even smiling broadly at more than one of the tragic statements. But Van had had experience along the southern coasts ; he thought of Siboney, the hospital tents and huts, the sick faces, the hot breath of the jungle. "Perhaps for the heated term, you had better come up here. I can get you rooms at The Altamont, I find, and though this town isn't considered much of a summer resort, you will be in a great deal cooler and pleasanter place than southern Mississippi," he wrote them. His intentions were of the best, but alack, as once before in his career, Van was not quick enough ! Already the family had conceived a plan infinitely more picturesque and attractive ; and with them, as he knew to his cost, to make a plan meant to carry it out. It was with a face of ill omen that he read the enthusiastic letter which crossed his on the way.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, was the ultimate Paradise ! This was established by another shower of statistics, and sound, unassailable reasoning. They would go to New Orleans, and from there by boat, themselves and their chattels, to New York, where they would trans-ship for Halifax, a way of travel so cheap that it would only take four hundred dollars, and Evelyn would put in her seventy-five from "Moonlight on the Bayou," so that it would not come so hard on Van Cleve, dear, generous boy that he always was ! They would not think of asking him for this now, but it was a matter of life and death. They were all losing strength day by day, and the doctor told them that if

they waited, their vitality might become so diminished they would not have the energy to move. Immediately after this there came another letter, commenting on his own suggestion with gentle amusement; it was sweet of him to plan for them, but he was not in a position to know the circumstances and what they needed. Only see how much better Halifax would be! And they proceeded to point out its superiority on a score of different counts. Perhaps at this juncture Van Cleve again remembered the carpet anecdote; he answered very briefly.

There ensued upon this a brisk correspondence of which, fortunately, only a few scraps of letters have survived. I say fortunately, because it could not have been agreeable reading, to judge by the samples, nor particularly creditable to any of the writers. Van Cleve told them that he could not, offhand, pick up such a sum as they asked, and in plain words that he would not if he could. That he was willing to believe that Pass Christian was not a pleasant or healthy place during the summer, and so offered them a reasonable change; but that, as to moving them to Nova Scotia or anywhere else again, he had no more money to spend on such whims. And he wound up by intimating in terms that were not wholly unkind that this was his last word; they could take it or leave it.

No outsider could describe, no outsider could even comprehend the effect of this bombshell upon the ladies, upon Major Stanton, who was the soul of patience and amiability himself, and had never contradicted anybody in his life. For persons who were, as they honestly believed themselves to be, in an all but dying condition from the dreadful circumstances of existence at Pass Christian, it was astounding with how much vigor the ladies remonstrated, how much ink and time and mental effort they expended. "You poor darling, I know you are afraid you would never get your money back!"

Mrs. Lucas wrote ; “but *of course* we mean to repay you, Van Cleve. We know how hard you work for your money, and you are right to think that you have done enough for us. We only ask you to *advance* this. Evelyn will repay you, we will all pay you, if we have to work our fingers to the bone.”

I daresay Mrs. Lucas, who was a thoroughly good woman, would have been dumbfounded to see the pain and anger on her nephew's face when he read her letter; it was perfectly true that they owed him their living, every comfort and every pleasure for ten years, since the first day Van had gone to work ; then why should he have felt bitterly hurt and even insulted at their offering to pay him, if only a little ? She would not have been able to understand it. She was a good woman, and she would have told you that she loved Van Cleve devotedly and would do anything on earth for him — anything !

The young man ignored this handsome proposal ; he repeated his own. They could come to Cincinnati or not for the summer — as they chose. They chose not ; and it would appear that Van Cleve had not unprofitably followed his grandfather's example, for the family, Evelyn, Mrs. Lucas, some one of them, must have been stung into some kind of action. However they raised, or saved, the money, they did move to Halifax, bag and baggage, the beginning of August.

## CHAPTER III

### OWING TO ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY, MISS GILBERT REGRETS, ETC.

It was a matter of occasional comment that Lorrie showed so little sign of the real trial and suffering she had had to undergo. A heartbreaking thing had happened to the poor girl, but she never allowed herself to look heartbroken. Lorrie apparently did not dream of putting on black for her dead lover, or of going about enveloped in a romantic melancholy. On the contrary, she dressed herself as neatly and prettily as ever, and went to church, and made calls with her mother, and when winter came on and the season of receptions and parties opened, was to be found at her station behind the tea-tray or in the receiving line almost as often as formerly. Her character forbade any sort of posturing, morbid dwelling on her woes, or exploiting them before her family and friends. In this as in most of the other acts of her life she was the same bright, sweet, and sensible woman, the same good, conscientious daughter and sister that she had always been; and in the opinion of one person, a whole hogshead of tears and hours of daily lamentation would not have done her so much honor as the brave efforts she made to forget her trouble, or at least to put it out of sight, for the sake of other people.

If she spent an hour every night going over Philip's letters, or sitting silently before his photograph, and cried herself to sleep afterwards, no one knew anything about it. She always wore his ring; it had never been off her finger since he himself put it there and "kissed

it on" as he said — and Lorrie could see him now bending over her hand, caressing it, as he half-knelt beside her at their old sofa; she could see his stooped head with the thick, smooth, fair hair that she had always wanted to stroke — ah me! It was all over; it had come and gone like a dream that ended in a nightmare. She thought of the journey south — Tampa — the crowds hurrahing — the lonely days — the two nurses with their officious sympathy — her mother's distracted letters about Bob — she thought of it all, and sometimes, when she looked in her glass, wondered at the fresh and unmarked youthfulness of the face that looked her back. She had not a gray hair nor a wrinkle, yet she was twenty-nine years old and had put happiness — of one kind — out of her life forever. She did not often speak of Cortwright, or that dreadful time; and even her mother never saw Lorrie cry except the day when Van Cleve Kendrick brought her and Robert home, when the girl had clung to her father and sobbed hard for a brief moment; and one other time when Mrs. Gilbert, with tears in her own eyes, went to her with the little store of towels, napkins, dainty linens marked with a monogram *L. G. C.* upon which they had both been working a century ago before anything happened. The skeins of white embroidery-cotton were still folded in with them; there was a needle yet sticking in the stitch. "I'm going to lock them up in a trunk, Lorrie," Mrs. Gilbert said; "I know you can't bear to look at them."

"No, no, we oughtn't to do that — we oughtn't to waste them. You ought to use them, don't you think? I don't mind — truly I don't," said Lorrie, with a pitiful resolution and cheerfulness. But her mother looked in her face, and both women broke down. Mrs. Gilbert took the things away and locked them up, as she said, in a trunk in the attic; and there they lie, yellowing, to this day.



Some time during the summer there arrived a letter from Philip's father, somewhat to the surprise of the Gilbert family, to whom he had never made any mention of the old gentleman, and who had supposed that both his parents were dead. There was nothing mysterious about the elder Cortwright, however, as it quickly appeared; his son's neglect or forgetfulness, indeed, needed no explanation to the Gilberts, who knew by dreary experience that young men do not always keep in touch with their homes and their people. Mr. Cortwright senior wrote Lorrie a grave and dignified letter, referring to their common loss in adequate terms; if the Judge's periods were a little too flourishingly rounded, it came not ill, nevertheless, from a man of his birth and age and upbringing; and when he concluded by inviting himself to make them a visit in the fall, in order, as he said, to become acquainted with his dear boy's choice of a wife — a matter in which the Judge did not doubt Philip had been happy and lucky beyond his deserts — the Gilberts were ready enough to receive him. When the day came, the Professor hurried through his papers after class to get down to the Southern Railway Depot to meet their guest, without much idea of what he would look like, but eager in hospitality, and willing to take any trouble on Lorrie's account. Samuel was not a practical man; and though he was confident of miraculously stumbling upon Judge Cortwright and knowing him at once, he might have been there still, helplessly peering with his near-sighted eyes, and confounded by the size of the crowds, and the insane desire which everybody displayed to get somewhere at top speed, had not the judge cannily picked him out himself. Judge Cortwright was thoroughly practical; and having been in his day an owner of race-horses, and a poker-player of mighty renown, had probably made some study of his fellow-man.

Professor Gilbert had just been vaguely speculating about the large, tall, Southern-looking man, who might have been their guest, but for the fact that he was accompanied by a plump, highly colored, giggling young woman in a bright dress and feathers, chains of beads, and dangling, glittering gewgaws — I say the Professor had just remarked this pair, and decided against them, when the big man, after a sharp look at him, walked up and spoke.

"Am I mistaken, or is this Professor Gilbert?" he said in a deep, rich, husky voice; and as the Professor dazedly put out his hand, Judge Cortwright took and shook it warmly. "If there had been time, I should have written you word not to put yourself out to come and meet me, sir, but when your letter announcing your intention of so doing came, I was upon the point of starting, sir —"

"Not at all — not at all — I am very glad to. The young lady is your daughter, I suppose? We shall be very happy to have her with us. My wife and daughter will be delighted —" stammered Samuel, completely taken aback; and wondering inwardly if they were prepared at home for the extra visitor, as he advanced to greet her. She stared at him, and at the Judge, and burst into a loud laugh, rather disconcerting to the well-meaning gentleman. He stopped short awkwardly.

"Ahem — no, sir — oh, no, this is a young lady from my part of the world, who happened to be coming up on the same train with me," said Judge Cortwright, suavely. He did not think it necessary to explain that he had never met the young lady before. "Miss Nettie Frye, sir, who is intending to make a stay in your city."

Professor Gilbert, feeling dimly disquieted, he did not know why, bowed rather stiffly. Miss Nettie Frye laughed again. "Say, that's one on you, him taking me for your daughter, ain't it?" she said to the Judge

with charming frankness. Samuel never knew how or when or where they parted from this attractive young person. He offered mildly to take charge of the judge's valise; there was a good deal of noise and pushing among the crowd; he had an impression that he saw the judge escorting her to a cab with amiable, although not precisely fatherly, attentions; and he said to himself that he never had seen any young woman roll her eyes in such an extraordinary way. Certainly none of those in his classes did!

The Professor, however, was adding to his experiences at a rapid rate. Judge Cortwright, it turned out, knew the city quite well, parts of it, I daresay, much better than his anxious and somewhat bewildered host, though he had not visited it for ten years. Under his guidance, they stopped on the way home and had a drink at "The Mecca" while waiting for their car. Samuel had never been inside "The Mecca" in his life; he could not have distinguished a "first-class saloon" — as his companion assured him it was — from a third class, or one at the very bottom of the scale, for that matter; and without doubt he made a queer and laughable figure in the midst of the mahogany and plate-glass and marble and dazzling brass fittings. "I — I am not very fond of anything strong," he said shyly; since Robert grew up and fell into his deplorable habits, the father had never taken a drink of any kind of liquor. "I mean I find it doesn't agree with me," he added hastily, fearful of assuming a priggish attitude of disapproval. "Would it be possible to get a glass of water here?"

"Sure! Fizz?" said the barkeeper, cordially. The barkeeper, to Professor Gilbert's bottomless astonishment, was a clean, tidy, muscular, civil, decent young man, with an eye and complexion that would indicate absolute temperance! "Milk if you want it. Butter-milk? Sure!" He divided a quick and measuring

glance between them, probably allowing himself some private speculation about so oddly assorted a pair of customers. "Whiskey for yours, Colonel? What brand you using now?" he genially inquired, and, reaching a tentative hand to the row of bottles, by some magic singled out exactly the one of Judge Cortwright's choice!

Thus with a libation did the Judge's visit begin. Whatever he thought of his host, it was nothing to the confusion of mind with which his host regarded him. Samuel felt with dismay that he did not know what to do with Judge Cortwright. For all his mutton-chop side-whiskers, and his pedagogue's view of life, the Virginia gentleman, after forty years' absence from his native State, was still enough of a Virginian to understand the Kentuckian, in a fashion. He may not have considered it altogether seemly for a man of his own age, or a shade older, to have the eye for women, the not too nice taste in speech and anecdote, the fondness for high-proof bourbon and the other lively, youthful traits their visitor presently displayed, but the Professor remembered to have seen and known more than one man of just such a type in his own far-away young days, and they were worthy enough citizens; he was not disposed to criticise. But he knew very well that his house and company were not of the kind the judge was used to, or would ordinarily seek; it worried him. Possibly his wife was not so lenient, nor for once so hospitable in spirit; I don't think the little lady much fancied Philip Cortwright's father. "Well, anyhow, Lorrie was only going to marry his son. She didn't have to marry the whole family," she remarked apropos of nothing, as they were getting into bed that night. As for Lorrie, nobody knew what she thought, not even her own father and mother. Other people noticed a rather terrifying likeness between the father and son; one could not help wondering if Philip would have aged in the same way.

Mr. Van Cleve Kendrick, coming up to the house and meeting the Judge, found means to take him off their hands for part of the time, much to the relief of everybody concerned, including Judge Cortwright himself, who must have found the Gilbert society a little dull after a day or so of it. Van always looked queer when questioned about this experience. "Judge Cortwright? Oh, yes. Great old sport!" he would say with an enigmatic grin; "yes, I took him across the river to Latonia to the races several times, while he was here. Hey? Oh, yes, I had him down at the club playing pool. Great old sport!" And sometimes other men commented wonderingly on the fact that Kendrick, who was as respectable a man as you could find anywhere, was everlastingly loading himself up with some down-and-outer, some thoroughgoing bum to take care of and police around!

They were not without justification, for later on, when Robert Gilbert suddenly came back from the West and was seen about our streets once more, it was more often than not with Van Cleve. Bob was very much better — cured, according to his own report — and appeared to have straightened up at last; that is, he was always straight in Van Cleve's company; and either Van, or Lorrie, or his mother, was with him most of the time. I saw him with the family in church one Thanksgiving morning; by this time, he had been away for a year in that climate which is supposed to be almost a specific for cases of tuberculosis, if taken soon enough, as the family insisted his had been; but, to tell the truth, in spite of all the sanguine talk, Bob's "cure" was unconvincing. He did not look like a well man; still, he was not coughing nearly so much, and he was by nature of a thin and slender build, so that indicated nothing. It was touching to see Mrs. Gilbert mothering him; the church was draughty, and she put a knitted scarf about the back of his neck, which the

young man twitched off fretfully. Then, seeing the anxiety on her face, he picked the thing up and fumblingly adjusted it again, repentant. Poor Bob, poor sinner, there was always something sweet about him.

He was at home all that winter, housed for weeks at a time with what they called heavy colds; Lorrie gave up going out almost entirely so as to stay with him, read to him, keep him entertained. Robert would not have exacted any such sacrifice; he used to urge her to accept her invitations. "You ought to go, Lorrie; you oughtn't to stay here shut up in the house. It's bad enough for me to be jailed this way, let alone all the rest of you," he said half irritably. "Hang it, I wish you'd go out and hear something new or see something new so you could come back and tell us about it!"

"All right, Bob, I'll go then. Maybe Van Cleve will come over this evening, anyhow," said Lorrie, to please him.

"He doesn't have to. I don't have to have somebody hanging around me the whole time," Bob said, grumbling. Then he added apologetically: "It worries me to see all of you so worried. There's nothing really to worry about. I'll be all right in a little, as soon as this cold wears off. A cold always has knocked me out; don't you remember how they used to when I was a little fellow? Don't you remember, Lorrie?" he insisted.

"Yes, you've always had a horrid time with colds," said Lorrie, with a twinge at her heart.

"Well then, you know it's not serious. Why don't you and Mother go on to your teas and luncheons and things? I'm not going to open all the doors and windows and let the furnace go out, and go and roll in the snow with nothing on but my pajamas, just because you aren't here to watch me!"

"I — I don't really care much about it now, Bob, not the way I used to," Lorrie said at last. Her brother

stopped his half-laughing, half-vexed remonstrances, eying her with a new expression in which there was compassion and regret and something else, some other feeling compounded, one would have said, of doubt and distress.

"You mustn't let yourself think about that. You oughtn't to let yourself dwell on it. On poor Phil, I mean," he said gravely.

"I don't any more than I can help. I try not to. But you know I can't *forget*, Bob."

Bob, who had been lying on the sofa among pillows and magazines with an afghan spread over his thin knees, threw everything aside and got up and began to walk about the room restlessly. "You must stop that kind of brooding, I tell you, Lorrie," he said, pausing by her low chair. He spoke nervously, almost angrily. "Can't forget! Why, remembering won't bring him back. And if it did —" he broke off abruptly. "If it did, things mightn't be the same," he finished, in an uncertain voice. He took another turn up and down the room and came back to her chair. "I thought — I thought maybe you were beginning — I hoped maybe you'd — Van Cleve, you know, Lorrie — Van's a splendid fellow — I don't believe he's ever looked at any other girl in his life —"

"Oh, don't, Bob — oh, please don't! I can't think about *that* any more, *ever*. It's not just Van Cleve — it's just that I can't think of marrying anybody. It's all over and done with. Don't you see? It's all out of my life," Lorrie said painfully. "Don't talk to me about it again. I try not to be silly. I try not to be selfish. I try to keep it to myself. You want to help me, don't you? You want to make it easier for me?"

"Lord knows that's what I've wanted to do, Lorrie. Lord knows that's what I ought to do after the time you've had with me!" Bob groaned out. He dropped

on the sofa with his head in his two hands. "I don't want to make a mess of any more lives. I only thought you and Van Cleve — well, all right then, Lorrie, I won't say any more. I won't speak about it again."

So when Van Cleve, who averaged about two evenings a week — thus gossip calculated — came over at eight o'clock that night, Lorrie, true to her promise, had gone to somebody's dinner and theatre-party afterwards; and Van sat down to a game of checkers with his friend without appearing especially cast down by her absence. It has been said many times that he was a philosopher. If the truth were known, if Robert had known it, before he blunderingly and good-heartedly put in his oar, Van Cleve had already spoken for himself to Lorrie and had got his answer.

"I think a great deal of you, Van, but not that way," the girl said, sincerely pained at having to pain him; "you're the best friend we have. I'll never forget all you've done for us — for Bob —"

Van Cleve interrupted her. "Don't talk about that. Don't think that way. Even if it were so, I wouldn't want to hold that over you, or have you hold it over yourself," he said harshly. "Put all that out of the question. This is just you and me. You don't — you can't —" he fumbled and reddened like a boy over the words, but went on — "you don't love me — you don't feel as if you could marry me, even if there hadn't ever been anybody else, is that it? Or — or is it because of *him*, Lorrie?"

Lorrie nodded, her lips quivering. "Oh, Van, you dear boy," she said brokenly, and put out her hand to him. "You are always our Van Cleve, the man I like and respect more than anybody else in the world. But I can't marry you. I can't marry anybody. I feel somehow as if I were a mean creature because I can't do the only thing you've ever wanted me to do — I can't give you the only thing you've ever asked of me.



But would you think any the more of me if I forgot so easily, Van Cleve?"

He did not answer her directly. "Well, I waited," he said at last with a quick sigh; "I thought you might have gotten over it. But you haven't got anything to reproach yourself with. You never encouraged me; you are just *you*, and I couldn't help loving you and you couldn't have stopped me."

"Van Cleve, I wish I could care for you that way," said Lorrie, earnestly; "I *wish* I could! You ought to have everything you want, you've always been so good to everybody."

"Nobody cares for people because they're *good*," said Van, with his dry smile. He looked at her wistfully. "You don't mind my keeping on coming here? It won't annoy you? After all, you must have known how I felt long before this."

"Why — I — I — " Lorrie turned scarlet under his shrewd, kind eyes; and Van Cleve smiled again.

"Well, then, it won't be any different from what it was before," he said, practical as usual. "Don't worry, Lorrie. I'm not going to persecute you about this. If you should ever feel differently — why, I'm here, that's all."

And on this footing the old intimacy continued, Romeo playing his part with a cheerfulness and self-control in the very presence, as it were, of his blighted hopes, that go to show of what exceedingly un-Romeo-like, plain, serviceable stuff his character was constructed. People would talk, of course; but gossip was rather disarmed and put out of countenance by the lack of romance about the proceedings. The hero, for one thing, was quite as attentive and devoted to Mrs. Gilbert as to Lorrie, and always in a perfectly workaday, efficient style; yes, I have known Mr. Kendrick, in one of those domestic crises that will sometimes occur, to rise up, put on his hat, and go

forth and rout out a colored cook or laundress or woman-by-the-day from the fastnesses of Symmes Street, where these do mostly abide, and return with her to Mrs. Gilbert when advertising and intelligence bureaus and every other means had failed! What a performance for a Romeo! But can you show me another lover who has done as much? Van was more like an elder son in the house than ever, lending a hand to taking care of Bob and amusing him, consulted about their small finances, giving Lorrie presents on her birthday and at Christmas, which even her suspicious girl friends would allow seemed to have no sentimental significance whatever, patient, thoughtful, sane, reliable, prosaic in his relations with them as he had always been with all the world.

And where, all this while, was Mrs. Robert Gilbert and what was she doing whose place was surely with her husband in his ill-health — his *temporary* ill-health, as the family were so bent on making the outside world believe, on making themselves believe, perhaps? Where indeed? Nobody liked to ask after the first innocent ventures, which were received by the Gilberts with a stilted and evasive courtesy so unlike them that the slowest-witted acquaintance they had must have seen at once that something was wrong. Bob's wife never came near him; it was to be doubted if he ever even heard from her; the last authoritative news was that she was living with her mother in New York. Somebody had met her there on the street, and said that she was just as pretty as ever, though a good deal "made up," and that her manners were unchanged, and that she never said a word about Bob; if the Gilberts knew her address, it was as much as they knew about Paula, and probably it was *all they wanted to know*, as somebody remarked significantly. The marriage had evidently turned out one of those hasty ones to be repented at leisure which many of us had suspected on first

hearing of it. They couldn't get along. How could they have been expected to get along? That little Jameson girl had no sense, and, to speak plainly, Bob Gilbert was not heavily endowed that way either, in addition to being morally pretty unstable. He would never take care of himself, let alone support a wife and family. To be sure, Paula very likely had some money, but how long would that last them? And when it was gone, the Gilberts could not, and that big, overdressed, flashy Mrs. Jameson certainly would not, help them. Every one felt genuinely sorry for Bob's family, to whom the whole affair must be such a trial; it was not disgraceful, it was merely shabby, but people of good name and good breeding really suffer in such circumstances.

At about the time that everybody came to these conclusions it was reported that Bob was to be sent to some place in Vermont, some little town in the mountains where a well-known physician had established a sanatorium for such cases as his. His mother and Van Kendrick took him on east; and only a day or so after they had gone there came out in the court proceedings published in the morning papers, a notice which caused whatever readers stumbled on it a certain surprise and satisfaction, as at an oracle fulfilled. In the Court of Insolvency, No. 2459 (June 17, 1901), Paula J. Gilbert brought suit for divorce against Robert D. Gilbert. They were married in July, 1898; she charged him with desertion and non-support, and petitioned the court to annul the marriage and restore her maiden name. Marks, Schindler & Marks, attorneys.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER ISSUES A WARRANT

THE Gilbert *vs.* Gilbert action did not afford much material for wagging of tongues; it went through court as speedily and quietly as possible, the husband making no defence, so that within a week Paula was free, and Miss Jameson again if she chose. Nobody saw her, though her presence in town must have been necessary, and nobody knew what became of her afterwards. The newspapers, indeed, scenting a "story" which, however commonplace, would be a godsend in the hot weather and the dull times, would have made capital out of it; and from what we knew of Mrs. or Miss Paula she would have been ready enough to oblige them. But either she was greatly changed, or Messrs. Marks, Schindler & Marks, in their wisdom, interposed, for no "interviews" with her were published. It is true that a cut came out in the *Record-World*, representing her in a low-necked dress and large hat (photograph by Sarony Studios) labelled: "Mrs. Robert Gilbert, née Jameson. Mrs. Gilbert is the wife of Robert D. Gilbert, member of the prominent local family, and at one time connected with this paper. Mrs. Gilbert is now suing for divorce." But that was all; and the reporters who called at the Gilbert house were defeated by the very courtesy of their reception. The elder Mrs. Gilbert and her son were at their Vermont sanatorium; Miss Gilbert was not to be seen; and I believe the thin old Professor with his white hair and his simple manners

a generation and a society so infinitely removed from their own as to be quite incomprehensible to them, completely puzzled and baffled these brisk, inventive youths. They could make nothing out of him; he was utterly valueless from the journalistic standpoint, as uninteresting to their average reader as the Hebrew testament in the original; without seeming disagreeably unwilling, he gave the impression of being perfectly unable to furnish them with the details they sought; and they departed empty as they had come! They also sought out an intimate friend of the family, C. Kendrick, who was as affable as you please; and after he had answered all their questions, a discerning person might have observed that they were precisely as wise as they were before, and no wiser! Van had indeed given the Gilbert household some astute counsel when publicity seemed imminent.

"Now don't refuse to see the fellows from the papers, or have them shown out, or shut the door in their faces, or anything like that," he warned Lorrie and her father; "it's better to let them, and then they'll have something to say, after what. You don't need to tell them anything they're going to talk anyhow, you know; they've got to fill their paper up with something. The report make their living by it, and they don't mean any harm to say you don't need to tell them anything. Give 'em a chance to put in a lot of stuff about 'a petite brunette with sparkling brown eyes and a winsome grace of manner—'"

"A petite?—What, do you mean Lorrie?" the Professor, recognizing this description with amazement and indignation; "but surely it's necessary for Lorrie to submit to their impertinences? He doesn't have to meet them." said equal not

"All right, you see them then. You'll be 'a dignified gentleman of the old school, with a courtly elegance of repressing his grin."

"What difference does it make? They'll have something to say, and that's all they're after. Nobody pays any attention to them, or believes one-tenth of what the papers say. You don't yourself. Don't antagonize them, that's all."

Professor Gilbert looked at the younger man, unfeignedly troubled. His every instinct, trained and native, rebelled against what seemed to him a cheap, time-serving, and spiritless piece of policy; yet there was something convincing about Van Cleve's argument. "I'm afraid I'm very much behind the times," he said with a kind of good-humored chagrin. "Can you make any other suggestion, Van? For instance, supposing one of these young gentlemen calls on me, ought I to offer him entertainment? Cigars, eh?"

"You might if you chose. But just give him *one*. If you give him any more, he'll think they're aren't worth anything," said Van Cleve, entirely serious. It was at least a minute before he could make out why the old man suddenly broke into a chuckle. Hitherto, they had all been very grave, as well they might be, whenever Bob's difficulties had to be discussed. None of the Gilberts, though, lacked humor, and when the Professor actually appeared in the *Tribune* interview as "a fine, courtly gentleman of the old school," etc., almost exactly as Van had forecast, Lorrie and her father were as much amused as their friends.

It was that same year, but in the autumn, or at any rate, some time after Paula got her decree, for everybody had long since stopped talking about that incident — had completely forgot it, no doubt — that the Xylotite Hinge Company failed. This was probably the first news that many of us had that such a company existed; and although it has since been resuscitated, and they say is in a fair way of paying out after years of struggle, a large section of the community is still, like myself, in perfect ignorance of what Xylotite is, and

what kind of hinges are made of it, and who uses them, and why the manufacturers should have failed. Nevertheless, I have been assured that it was an enterprise well known in commercial circles, employing hundreds of thousands of capital, and of a spectacular size and growth. It went down with a crash that (to be metaphorical) shook the foundations of more than one other established business; all at once you began to hear of So-and-So being seriously involved, of Such-a-One making desperate efforts to keep above water — "he was interested in Xylotite, you know." Presently some person or persons in authority instituted a "PROBE OF XYLOTITE AFFAIRS," as the newspapers proclaimed. "Experts will be put on the books of the Xylotite Concern" was their next announcement; and that these latter found things in a dangerous muddle might be guessed from the length of time, some six or eight weeks, which their labors took, and from the ominous items of information that at intervals found their way to the press. "The Xylotite Company did a business over a large territory, and we have found that a convenient form was to incorporate several companies, which was also used as a means of securing additional credit. Among these were: The Lawrenceburg Machine Tool Company, Columbus Weights & Pulleys, Indurated Rubber of Akron," and so on and on. That was only one (a fair sample) of the damaging details brought to light.

Notwithstanding the sensational disclosures, however, few people that one knew, excepting possibly Van Kendrick and men like him who were buried heart and soul in business, cared much about the vicissitudes of Xylotite; nobody had any friends or relatives ruined by it; and if we must talk about financial troubles, there were rumors a great deal more interesting and also dismaying in circulation which never seemed to get as far as the papers; they went the rounds of the private houses, the men repeated them after dinner when the

coffee and liqueurs came in and the smoking began; there were allusions, headshakings, careful admissions, wise or satirical comments. It was all about the National Loan and Savings Bank, Mr. Gebhardt's bank, that bank that Van Cleve Kendrick had been with so long; it began at the Christmas holidays, and went on all winter in its curious subterranean way; without quite understanding it, everybody sincerely hoped that "it wasn't so." Most of us were fond of the Gebhardts, and disliked to think of them in money difficulties. The women of the family, being the people whom it touched the nearest, probably never heard a word of the reports; who would have told them? They could not even have suspected that the head of their house was embarrassed in the slightest manner. Mr. Gebhardt was devoted to his family, the most liberal and indulgent of husbands and fathers, a giver to every charity you could name, a man who was constantly and unostentatiously doing kindnesses even to persons who had no claim on him, except some far-fetched sentimental one. He kept this up to the very end; and as he never brought the office home with him (so he had often been heard to say) nor shared any of his worries with his circle of women, they could not be expected to know anything about his affairs. All the while that the obscure hints about the shakiness of the National Loan were spreading abroad, the Gebhardt girls danced, and dressed, and entertained as expensively as ever; and the youngest of the four, Annette, who would be out next year, was getting ready to go to Europe for six months with a party of two or three girls from her Connecticut finishing-school, when — when the trouble came. Her father went on to Washington the beginning of January for a few days, and Annette was very much put out at his refusal to take her — the first time he had ever refused her anything she wanted in her life. She might have gone to the New Year's reception at the White



House, she might even have been "behind the line," as one of the Cabinet girls was a school chum and had visited at the Gebhardt summer home at Watch Hill. It was a severe disappointment to her, and to her mother, too. Annette Gebhardt was a pretty girl, the prettiest one of them all; she has been a stenographer in the city office of the Pennsylvania Railroad for the last six years, I believe.

Xylotite had been forgotten in its turn, by the time the National Loan and Savings explosion occurred. It was Easter Monday when we took up our morning *Tribune* and read in the middle of the front page that following discoveries made by Clearing-House Examiner Walter H. Fisher in the affairs of the National Loan and Savings Bank, that institution had been ordered closed. Mr. Fisher refused to talk for the papers; but it was learned from other sources that the bank was not absolutely insolvent; the expectation was that the depositors might recover in the neighborhood of forty cents on the dollar at the final clean-up unless further investigation revealed a worse condition; the shareholders would be completely wiped out. Excessive and bad loans, unprofitable deposit accounts, and bad management were to blame for the catastrophe, which, while not unexpected, owing to rumors which had been afloat for some time, had startled the financial world by its magnitude and hopelessness. It was intimated that the recent collapse of the Xylotite Hinge Company had hastened this other downfall. Officials of the bank (whose names were given) were uniformly reticent when approached, explaining that a full statement would be given out in a few days; reporters had called at the magnificent home of the National's president, Julius Gebhardt, on Adams Road, the North Hill, but were denied admittance.

There followed a condensed biography of the bank from the year of its foundation 1875, and of Mr. Geb-

hardt himself, the facts of whose career were plain and simple enough and might have been gathered from a dozen people, as he had lived here all his life. His and the National Loan's troubles began with the ambitious alterations and enlargements of the old building a few years ago, the newspaper accounts declared. The marble doorway and the bronze grille-work of the stairs had been specially designed and executed by a New York firm at a cost, it was said, of \$75,000. The management of the bank had undoubtedly been led into this and other extravagant policies during the flush times immediately preceding the disastrous year 1896, which inaugurated a period of depression as severe as this country has ever felt, etc. And the report concluded with a list of the shareholders, the unfortunates who were going to be wiped out.

That was all for that one day, but it was enough. Rarely does a disturbance on "The Street," even of so grave a character, create such a flurry socially. All the women were talking about the National Loan failure that afternoon at their card-parties and luncheons; they quoted what their husbands had said at the breakfast-table without much understanding, but with looks of awe; they asked one another anxiously what it was best to do. Would you telephone to Mrs. Gebhardt? Or call at the house and — and leave a message of sympathy, you know? It must be terrible for her and the girls. Would you write a note? Somebody was going to send flowers, but it was objected, not unreasonably, that that would look too much like a funeral. It wouldn't be tactful to be *too* sympathetic. If you showed too great an interest, it was liable to be taken for curiosity; but if you didn't show *some*, you would seem perfectly horrid and callous. The difficulty lay in steering the middle course. "It doesn't happen often enough for one to know what would be strictly proper," one worried lady was overheard to sigh; "if

I had always been very intimate with Mrs. Gebhardt, of course I'd go right to her. But I feel I can't intrude that way, though we've known each other for years, and I've been entertained at her house hundreds of times, and she's on the Incurables' Board, and the Widows' Home, and the Flower Mission with me. It's dreadful. If it had just been a death in the family — ! We're all used to *that!*"

Within two or three days, the promised statement came out, a whole column of it, headed by: "PROBE OF NATIONAL LOAN AND SAVINGS CONTINUED. SENSATIONAL DISCLOSURES. KENDRICK GETS PANNED," — a manner of calling attention to it which fully succeeded, thereby indicating (I suppose) that in the journalistic view, the end justifies the means. For, when the friends of the bank and of the official named, after reading the above with surprise and concern, went on to the report itself, they found, as occasionally happens in our newspaper practice, that the headlines had only the most remote and exiguous connection with the actual facts ! For one thing, the new disclosures could scarcely be called sensational, inasmuch as everybody had been expecting them, and they were in a sense an amplification of what was already known. Mr. Fisher with his clerical staff, aided by the head-bookkeeper of the National, V. C. Kendrick, and the assistant bookkeeper, R. Meyer, had worked till a late hour every night last week, leaving themselves the shortest possible intervals of rest ; the Examiner's job was monumental, according to the report ; he had reviewed practically every one of the bank's accounts, classifying them for the convenience of the Clearing-house Association in three divisions, "good," "doubtful," and "worthless" ; they had the papers in bushel-baskets ; and when they got through (said the *Tribune*), "The condition of the room bore testimony to the financial whirlwind which had swept it." . . . "Certain collaterals behind loans to the Xylotite

Company were absent, it is charged, from the notes where they should be pinned in good banking practice." . . . "It is said that the average cost of the special, bank, and savings deposit accounts stood the National Loan between 2.75 and 3 per cent. Other banks insist that there is no money in these deposits at this rate, and that the only benefit they are to a bank is to make a 'flash' with big deposit accounts." After receiving the report, the Association, consisting of representatives from all the clearing-house banks in the city, Messrs. Geo. Douglas, Edward B. Hooper, Morris Kuhn, etc. (the *Tribune* gave all the names), in a session that lasted four hours, the president and three directors of the National being present, finally reached the decision that an adjustment of the National Loan's affairs to enable it to continue business was impracticable. "It was a dramatic scene" — to quote the paper again — "when Julius Gebhardt, president of the defunct organization for the last fifteen years, and connected with it throughout his business career, took his dismissal from the ranks of bankers. Mr. Gebhardt, who seemed to be much affected, rose and said that he wished to thank the Association; that if they had seen their way to backing his bank up in its troubles, his gratitude would have been boundless; but that he realized they were using their best judgment, and he was willing to abide by it. After his little speech, the meeting dissolved. It is understood that the next move will probably be made by the shareholders, to call a meeting and decide what action, if any, shall be taken. Rumors of a Federal suit involving Gebhardt and others were rife on the street to-day, but could not be confirmed."

As to that "KENDRICK GETS PANNED," which had given persons who knew him such a shock, interviews with Mr. Fisher and one or two other authorities revealed that no such formidable process as "panning" would describe had taken place nor anything resembling

it. It was now made known that the Examiner, on his regular inspection, six months before, had sent a report to the Association that conditions at the National Loan were decidedly unsatisfactory. Later Mr. Gebhardt had made a trip to Washington to see the Comptroller of the Currency, and had received the ultimatum to "clean up or be cleaned up." Notwithstanding the warning, nothing looking towards any kind of straightening out was done at the National in spite of the personal efforts of Mr. Kendrick who, as it now appeared, since he became aware of the exact state of affairs, had made repeated and vigorous protests to the head of the organization. Finally, on the 27th of March, in the course of a stormy conversation with the president, Kendrick had declared his intention of writing to the Examiner, and acquainting him exactly how matters stood. A young woman stenographer who had been within hearing of the controversy, which went on behind closed doors in the president's own room, reported that Kendrick had raised his voice and got very angry and profane; she had heard him say that he was no d—d dummy like the rest of them to sit still and do what he was told; that, by —, he had smelled something rotten the first day he sat with the directors and found that the loans weren't read. He had also said that American Bung Company was only another infernal swindling *alias* for Xylotite; he wouldn't stand for it — you couldn't play horse with *him* — and a great deal more in the same style. Miss Nevins had not overheard any of Mr. Gebhardt's replies to all this; he had evidently been much more moderate; everybody in the bank, she said, liked Mr. Gebhardt, who was "just lovely" to all of them, and had been in particular so good to Mr. Kendrick, she didn't see how he could talk to Mr. Gebhardt that way.

Sitting in the street-car that morning there were next to me two men who were discussing the National

Loan all the way down town; it was curious and instructive to hear them say (for I listened unblushingly) that they never had trusted Gebhardt, that they always had suspected he was crooked — “or plain fool; it’s pretty near as bad when it comes to letting him handle other people’s money,” one of them said. After Mr. Gebhardt’s fall, everybody simultaneously found out that they had never trusted him, or that they had always had a poor opinion of his business sense! “There’s one honest man in the mix-up, anyhow, this Kendrick, the fellow that put the Examiner wise to what was going on. Wrote to him, it says,” said this gentleman, as he folded up the paper.

The other, who was chewing a toothpick, looked sceptical. “Fisher would have been round and found out for himself in two or three weeks, anyhow,” he said; “looks to me like Kendrick was trying to get from under. Looks to me like it was a case of thieves falling out, more than anything else. You see Kendrick had that rumpus with Gebhardt, after they’d been as thick as could be for years. A man can’t stay ten years in a bank and be as close as he was to the top without knowing more about it than Kendrick claims to have. And a man don’t get that mad about somebody else’s money being risked. If it was his own — !”

“Your idea is it was just spite work, then?”

“Sure. They had a quarrel, and Kendrick did it partly to get even. Why, look here, in that interview they got out of him, he admits that he’d borrowed money of Gebhardt. My guess is that Gebhardt wouldn’t lend him any more, or refused to let him in on some deal, so he gets sore and makes up his mind to put Gebhardt out of business.”

“I didn’t see that about the borrowing. Is that in the paper?”

“Yes — inside page. It seems they went through Gebhardt’s private desk and papers along with the

rest — Fisher turned everything inside out, you know — I expect the whole of that Xylotite loan business hasn't come out yet. Anyhow, first thing you know they found some kind of begging letter from Kendrick's sister or mother or somebody representing that the family — they live away from here somewhere — were in some kind of fix and needed some money to help 'em out. And then there were some more letters acknowledging a loan, and thanking him for it and so forth — five hundred dollars, I think it was. Of course that's a small sum, but that just shows you how close Kendrick was to Gebhardt; and besides you don't know how many times they may have done that, how much they may have got out of him in dribs, till Gebhardt got tired of it. Of course Kendrick himself don't ask for the money — oh no! All he does is to get behind the women and let them ask for it. He's been making a good salary right along; his family didn't need to ask Gebhardt or anybody else for money, unless he told 'em to. You'd probably find that every cent they've borrowed has gone to some bucket-shop; that's the way men get away with it, in just those little dabs. Anybody that wants money for any legitimate enterprise goes out and borrows it openly, *you* know that. No, sir!" he spoke with righteous warmth, chewing vigorously on the toothpick; "when I read that, it settled my opinion of Kendrick."

"It don't look very good," the other man admitted; "what did Kendrick say when the reporters got on to this letter business, and asked him?"

"Didn't say anything, just acknowledged it. He couldn't very well help himself, you know. Made some bluff about that being a private matter between himself and Gebhardt — some big talk like that. It's all in the paper — you read it yourself, and see what *you* think."

"Well, I wouldn't want to condemn anybody whole-

sale. After all, Kendrick had the choice of letting things go on as they were at the bank and piling up bigger losses for everybody concerned, or of blowing it up at once and himself along with it —”

“That’s what he did, and took a chance on getting out.”

“That makes him either a mighty honest man or a mighty desperate one,” said the other with a laugh; “oh, well, give him the benefit of the doubt, anyway.”

These two probably represented fairly the varying opinion of the public, amongst whom there would be some on Van’s side, or, at least, on the side of moderation and impartiality; and it is to be feared many more as critically biassed as the man with the toothpick. Van Cleve knew it; he knew his world. He felt no disposition to waste time attempting explanations, or demanding justice from the community at large. “In the long run it doesn’t make any difference how much you’ve been wronged, or how well you talk, or what proofs you’ve got; all that people know is that you’re letting out an awful yelp about something, and they wish you’d quit!” he said sourly; “anybody that doesn’t trust me, can look up my record. I’m not going around showing it to people, but I haven’t got anything to be afraid of or ashamed of. Everybody will forget all about it directly, anyhow; ten years from now, they’ll only remember that the National Loan and Savings Bank went to pieces, and that V. C. Kendrick was somehow connected with it.” A prophecy which has literally come true!

The morning after the final report appeared he went down to the bank for the last time, to clean out his desk; Meyer was to be there, too, and they were expecting Mr. Gebhardt. It happened to be market-day, and there was a keen smell of fresh meats and vegetables on the air; the stands and carts were ranked all along the curb, with among them many of those humble clients



of the National Loan whom Van Cleve had grown to know so well. For all his hardness, he would have given something not to have to meet their honest, worried faces, their eyes that followed him with so unnatural and painful an interest. He had not despoiled them; he had tried to save them; his hands were clean; and he was surprised at the suddenness and strength of his desire to have them know it. Let who will suspect him of being a scoundrel or a weakling, but not these! Not these poor hard-working men and women! The old German wife he knew the best came up to him, with her scared, trembling old face. "Mr. Kentrick, Mr. Kentrick, meine Hilda she say der bank iss go bust mit all der mazuma!" She sobbed the grotesque words, clutching at the sleeve of his coat with toil-cramped fingers, a figure of Tragedy among the pots of hyacinths and Easter-blooming lilies, the onions and carrots and crocks of cottage-cheese. All the other old women, and the lank younger ones with their shawled or sunbonneted heads, the stoop-shouldered men and the children, who were bobbing about everywhere underfoot, crowded up, hanging on his words. Not all of them had lost by the bank's failure; on some of the faces there was no feeling stronger than curiosity, or a sordid excitement. "Iss it true, Mr. Kentrick? It aindt true, aindt it?" clamored the old woman.

"Pretty near true, Mrs. Habekotte," said Van Cleve, grimly. "You'll get a little something back."

She dropped her hands with a wail; some of the other women set up a sympathetic lamentation. "Poor soul, ain't it awful! How much did she have in?" one of them questioned Van Cleve. Just as he was extricating himself, Mrs. Habekotte broke through her circle of condolence, and ran after him, "Mr. Kentrick, your own money mit der bank got away also yet?"

"That's right. I'm about cleaned out."

She contemplated him mournfully, with a kind of

resigned and unenvious comparison of their lots. "Vell, you are young, already! *Aber*, when one is old —!" she sighed, and plodded back to her stall, drooping, followed by her clan of neighbors. Van Cleve heard some of them volubly reporting the fact that he too was "busted," something which appeared to establish his honesty to their minds.

Meyer was waiting for him on the steps of the bank, and they went in behind the familiar bronze gratings that had proved to be so disastrously costly, and went to work, but after a while found themselves "stalled," as Meyer said, by the non-arrival of their ex-president; he was to have been there at half-past ten, and was, in general, the most punctual of men. The minutes wore on, and still they lounged. Meyer had one cigar, a long, thin stogie of unimaginable flavor, which he cut in two; and they smoked it, commenting on the strangeness of smoking there in the bank, the strangeness of the silence and emptiness at what had been wont to be the busiest and most crowded hour of the day. At last, as it was striking eleven, Van Cleve went up stairs to the real-estate office on the third floor to telephone, the bank's instrument having been disconnected. There was some trouble. "I don't believe I can get you that number, party, they don't answer," the telephone-exchange girl had just announced, when an agitated voice at the other end of the line broke in: "Well, what is it? Do stop ringing! What is it? Who are you and what do you want?"

"Tell Mr. Gebhardt it's Kendrick, please; we're waiting for him at the bank."

"Kendrick? Wait a minute!"

Van Cleve, standing with the telephone at his ear, was aware of a wild flurry of talk, sobbing, ejaculations, going on somewhere near the other end. Then some one began again; it was a minute before he could recognize Mrs. Gebhardt's voice. "Mr. Kendrick, is it you?"

Oh, won't you please go right away down to the — where did they say he had to go, Natalie? — to the Courthouse — no, no, it's the Government Building — he's there — they wouldn't let me go with him — oh, I'm so afraid — never mind, Natalie, I'll tell Mr. Kendrick. He's with the Marshal — in the Marshal's office, I think they said. They wouldn't let me go with him, and I'm so afraid — he hasn't been well, you know, since this terrible trouble came. Will you go down there, Mr. Kendrick?"

Van Cleve said that he would be glad to be of any use. And indeed he was; for he ran out and caught the next car and got down to the Government Building just as poor Julius Gebhardt, accompanied by the Marshal and the Chief Deputy and his lawyer, and watched from afar by a little swarm of newspaper-men, was going into United States' Commissioner Dixon's room for a preliminary hearing; he was under arrest, charged with having abstracted and wilfully misappropriated certain of the moneys, funds, and credits of the National Loan and Savings Bank to the amount of twenty-eight thousand dollars (\$28,000); "the said Julius Gebhardt was then and there the duly elected and acting president of said banking association, and he did then and there unlawfully and wilfully convert same to his own use with intent to injure and defraud the said National Banking Association and the shareholders thereof." Van Cleve reached there just in time to go out and hunt up the bondsmen for him.

## CHAPTER V

### BUSINESS WOMEN

AFTER a year or so of Nova Scotia, the Van Cleve family moved to Salem, Massachusetts, as we heard through Miss Gilbert, who was always more likely to know something of them and their whereabouts than any one else. But since that time we have rather lost sight of Van Cleve's people; they have never come back here, and their various flights and settlings have been too distant and uncertain to be easily followed. The last news was they were in Pasadena, and Evelyn was engaged to a Mr. Heffelbauer, "a son of the millionaire prune-man," as some one told me; it may be true, for in *American Backgrounds*, the magazine of house decoration I came across quite by accident the other day, a half-tone of a charming garden in the Italian style, pools, marble benches, dark, pointed fir trees and all the rest of it, labelled: "Formal garden at Idlewild, the estate of W. D. Heffelbauer, San José, Calif. Prune orchard in the distance. Photograph from a painting by Miss E. Lucas." So, I say, there may be something in that rumor.

And I will confess it has occurred to me once or twice to wonder whether a millionaire in the family might not help Van Cleve out a little, and to hope that the prospective Mrs. Heffelbauer's papa-in-law will be liberal with his prune-money. To be sure, Van doesn't need help much nowadays; they say he makes a great deal more than a comfortable living out of the real-estate business he went into after the National Loan fail-

ure. He borrowed money for the venture, and opened an office over the Central Building and Loan Association, with which organization he had been connected a long while. Its members stood by him staunchly, in spite of the ugly gossip going about; the small clients whom he had gathered during his term at the bank stuck to him, and he gradually gained others; nevertheless, he must have had a gloomy time of it for the first few years. Heavens, how he worked! What nights he spent awake, what days of effort and anxiety! Outwardly, he gave no sign of it; he had the temperament for such a struggle, and in a sense it agreed with him. I have heard him say with a laugh that in the worst of his pinches, he never worried half so much over holding any job, or making both ends meet, as he did the very first time he went to work, a lad of eighteen, at the shoe factory in St. Louis, and used to go up, trembling, for his pay envelope every Saturday night, in deadly fear of hearing that he was to be "laid off." "I got the place during a rush season they were having, with the understanding that if competent and satisfactory I was to be taken on regularly," he explained; "'competent and satisfactory!'" My job was sticking black silk labels with the firm's name on 'em in gilt letters in the insides of the shoes, and I wasn't so green but that I knew they could get fifty boys to do that whenever they needed them — that's what was on my mind. And I thought the family were headed straight for the poorhouse if it wasn't for me and my eight dollars a week!" He laughed again, but to a discerning listener, the story was not all funny; and where would his family have been by now but for Van Cleve, one could not help questioning.

No, hard work, debts and expenses, narrow profits, harrowing uncertainties, none of these were a trial to Van Cleve; he had lived too much of his life under those same conditions, and would scarcely have known

what to do with himself in untrammelled leisure. But what did gall him was the knowledge that to very many people, good honest people, however small-minded and unfair they might be, he would always be an unscrupulous and untrustworthy man. A scoundrel who kept his scoundrelism just inside the limits of the law; a rat who left a sinking ship; a fellow who had been ready to profit by some shady transaction with the National Loan funds, but was smart enough to get out in time, and leave Gebhardt with the bag to hold, — that was their judgment, and as I have said, Van Cleve knew it. It was true that a thorough inquiry into the bank's affairs had brought out nothing discreditable to him; the very man who talked most knowingly about Kendrick's sharp practices could not describe one of them, knew not a soul whom Kendrick had injured, nor had been injured himself to the value of a penny. But the intangibility of the suspicions made them harder to disprove; and even to-day, after all this time, and though Van's whole life, before and since, has been in direct contradiction, there still remain people who will answer any statement about Van Cleve Kendrick by remarking sagely: "Oh, yes, he's that fellow who nearly got caught with Julius Gebhardt, in the National Loan smash-up. Got hold of a lot of money by making his mother borrow it on some pretext or other, and lost it all. Tell you if *I'd* been District Attorney, I'd have got *him*. There's too much quibbling about technicalities, and not enough common-sense justice in our law practice nowadays."

It seemed strange to Van Cleve afterwards, when the irretrievable had happened, that he had never suspected, scarcely even troubled himself to ask, at the time of the family's removal from Pass Christian to Halifax, whence had come the money for the journey, which he himself had refused to supply them. He understood that Evelyn had sold some pictures; well and good! He had

received the news with a surprise not entirely complimentary to the artist; but had made no further inquiry. It was not until a year and a half later, in the summer of 1901, that he found out the truth. Nineteen hundred and one turned out a fateful year for Van; Mr. O'Rourke gave up his place among the bank directors at last, having indeed been called to another some six feet underground in Spring Grove Cemetery, so that the poor old man never knew the disgrace that was to come upon their management or mismanagement; and Mr. Kendrick, who was even at that time cloudily dissatisfied and uneasy over the conduct of affairs, took his seat. The hot weather came on; Van Cleve took Mrs. Gilbert and Bob on east to the Vermont sanatorium, and himself extended the trip to visit his family, who were by this time getting ready for the Salem move.

It had been almost three years, but Van found them not much changed. His grandmother looked a good deal older, and clung to him rather pathetically; his aunt and cousin were as slender, brilliant, and emphatic as ever; Major Stanton had a new story, a tensely dramatic one, beginning: "When I was with Sherman on his famous march to the sea, of which you may have heard —" and reciting how he had "taken a detail" on a scouting expedition, and found a dozen people starved to death in a negro-cabin where they had taken refuge, the women in ball-dresses with jewels on their necks, and on every face a set smile ghastly to behold! The Major didn't invent this grisly tale, either, though his telling of it could hardly be surpassed. You may find it in Napier's "History of the Peninsular War" any day you choose to look. Van Cleve listened to it with due appreciation; he recalled his boyish agonies of shame and fear of ridicule with amusement nowadays. Uncle Stan was harmless; everybody saw through him, he reflected with a kind of laughing affection.

As for the rest of the family, they were sincerely delighted to see him; all the women hung on him with caresses; they had his favorite dishes on the table; upset the whole house to suit what they fancied to be his convenience or his whim; "entertained" him by the hour; showed him off before their friends, and enemies, too — they had an entire new set of both about whom they were as hotly enthusiastic in praise and blame as had always been their habit. Though they had gone off and left him without scruple, though they had had more than one disagreement with him, and had often complained to one another of his harshness and obstinacy, about the impossibility of reasoning with him, and his brutal way of "saying things," they were nevertheless very fond and proud of Van Cleve. No outsider would have dared to criticise him in their presence as severely as they did themselves; they were loyal to the core; and, even if Van had been as arrant a blackguard as ever walked, would have loved and shielded him. They had long ago forgiven the Pass Christian grievance, being always generous-spirited and ready to let bygones be bygones. And, besides, the impracticability of Halifax as a place of further residence, and the extreme desirableness of Salem now occupied them fully. Van Cleve heard them leniently, for once.

"It might not be a bad plan," he said; "this place seems to be all right, but I'd be better satisfied if you were a little nearer me, so I could reach you quickly in case some trouble came up. It takes too long on the road coming here."

"Oh, Van, you *have* so much judgment!" said his aunt, devoutly; "I knew if we could get that splendid clear head of yours to work, you would get right to the bottom of — of everything at *once*. Our only problem is getting to Salem. You know how we hate to ask you for another cent after all you're constantly doing." Tears came into her eyes, as she gazed at him; it was



quite true; they *did* hate to ask him for money — or thought they did.

"That's all right," said Van, briefly; "it's possible that I can't give you all you need, but you might begin and save a little — don't stint yourselves, just save what you can, you know — every month from now until your lease here runs out. Then with that, and what I can spare, you may be able to make out. Sold anything lately, Evelyn?"

"Oh, this isn't any place for pictures, Van," the artist explained with energy. "That's one *very* strong reason for our getting away. I really don't think we ought to stay any longer than we can possibly help; we can get somebody to take over the lease, you know, so we won't lose anything that way. It's *business*, you know, with me, Van. I'm simply *buried* here."

"What's the matter? Aren't the people here up in art, and all that? Can't you get them interested? I thought it could hardly be a worse place than Pass Christian, and you did pretty well there."

Evelyn and her mother began together: "Oh, mercy, don't talk about Pass Christian! It was horrid. There was nobody there but a great *drove* of common rich people that didn't care for anything but money, and didn't know any more about art than they did about geometry. I daresay their houses were full of Rogers's statuary and prize chromos. The only way to sell them pictures would have been by the yard or the pound. It wasn't even worth while to show them my pictures; they would have been pearls before swine," Evelyn finished contemptuously.

"Well, who bought them, then? You did sell some," Van Cleve asked; he was used to their teacup-tempests of disapproval and denunciation, their violent likes and dislikes, and seldom gave himself the trouble of looking for a cause; but this promised to be interesting. "Some of the swine must have *known* a pearl

when they saw it," he said, restraining a certain inclination to laugh. Evelyn saw it, however, and flushed angrily.

"Oh, I know what you're thinking, Van Cleve, but other people appreciate my work, people who have seen a great deal more, and know more about art than you do; Mr. Gebhardt, for instance!"

"That's so, he bought one when he was down there. He showed it to me out at the house, I remember. I thought it was pretty good," said Van Cleve, cordially; "who took the others? You seem to have a good many left still." He glanced about at the walls, which, in fact, were as well covered as ever.

"Mr. Gebhardt," said Evelyn, with a shade less confidence than before; and this time Van Cleve was openly astonished.

"What? All? The whole four or five hundred dollars' worth, I mean? Thunderation!" he ejaculated; and paused with a puzzled face. "It's funny he never said a word to me about them. He only showed me that one." And now he looked at the three women, sudden suspicion growing in his quick, light eyes. "How many pictures did he take, Evie?"

Everybody again began talking at once.

"Why, it was four — he took — that is, there were four of them, Van. But you don't quite understand — at least you don't seem quite to have understood —"

"I didn't want them to do it, Van Cleve; I knew you wouldn't like it, but they *would*, anyhow —" his grandmother cried.

"You see it — it wasn't a sale exactly —"

"Well, Mr. Gebhardt can have them whenever he sends. It's the same thing —"

Van Cleve silenced them with a gesture. "One at a time," he said with a voice and expression so like the late lamented Joshua that his grandmother jumped

and gasped. "I want to know what you've been doing. Aunt Myra, will you please tell me? I said, *one at a time*, Evie. Now Aunt Myra, will you go ahead?"

"Van Cleve, you know it was when we wanted to come here, and we couldn't bear to worry you after you said you — you couldn't let us move again, and we thought we'd have to stay there in that horrible place forever, and oh, Van, you can't have any idea how terrible it was! We couldn't *stand* it. It was *killing* us all. We had every one of us been down with *coast fever*, and the colored servants were so lazy and dirty and disgusting; just think, the last one I had went off and left the muffin-pans stuck away in the back of the closet with some of the batter in them! And the doctor said we were all the kind of constitutions that would *never* get acclimated, *never*. Van Cleve, we were just *desperate* —" Mrs. Lucas had to stop for breath; Van Cleve waited patiently; he had no doubt of presently getting to the truth, for they were truthful and upright women.

"So I wrote to Mr. Gebhardt. You know he had told us over and over again that very time when he was there, and bought 'Moonlight on the Bayou,' that he would do anything in the world to help you, financially, or any way, and wished he could have the chance. So I wrote him just how it was: that you couldn't afford to move us, and we didn't want to be any more of a drain on you, when you were trying so hard to get ahead. Only it was a case of *life and death*, and we *must* do something, for a little more of Pass Christian would finish us all. And I told him that Evelyn had four pictures that she would let him have for five hundred dollars; she considers them her best work, and you know, Van, they have been exhibited and *wonderfully* spoken of by the finest critics in the country. I enclosed the newspaper clippings so that he could see for himself," said Mrs. Lucas, impressively; "I wanted him to know

that he would be getting a *bargain*, that it wasn't just talk on my part —"

"I *begged* you not to do it — I *said* Van Cleve wouldn't like it," reiterated the old lady.

"Well, no, I don't like that sort of thing," Van said, temperately; "but I suppose there's no harm in it, since all artists do it, I'm told. I wouldn't like Mr. Gebhardt to think that I was putting you up to it, that's all. He might, you know. However, it can't be helped now," he meditatively rubbed his chin. "Did he take them at that price?"

"No, he didn't take them at all — oh, Van Cleve, he was perfectly lovely, he is the *dearest* man!" cried Evelyn. "He wrote back a beautiful letter and said that he would be proud to own any pictures from the same brush as his beautiful 'Moonlight on the Bayou'; but he didn't want to take advantage of me that way; and that he had often thought what a pleasure it must be to do something towards helping struggling talent, because genius always did have to struggle, no matter how great it was, and I was no exception to that rule; and if I would accept it, he —"

"He'd give you the money, but you could keep the pictures, is that it?" said Van Cleve.

"Yes, but he put it in the sweetest, most delicate way. We *couldn't* refuse flat, Van, it would have been horrid; so Mama wrote —"

"I wrote and told him how much we appreciated his noble, generous offer, and how we hoped he wouldn't think us ungrateful, if we considered it as a loan, not a gift," said Mrs. Lucas, eagerly; "I told him we would keep the pictures since he wanted us to, but as far as we were concerned they would be *security* for his money, and he could have them any time. And he wrote back and said that was perfectly satisfactory. So you see it was nothing but an ordinary business transaction after all, Van Cleve, and you mustn't worry about it, you

dear boy; we wouldn't be so hateful and selfish as to do anything that would cause you one minute's worry."

Van Cleve sat silent, rubbing his chin, while all the women gazed at him a little apprehensively; not indeed that they were in the least anxiety about the wisdom and righteousness of their own recent course, but it was sometimes so difficult to bring Van Cleve to their point of view; with all his splendid, manly qualities he was often so stubborn and unreasonable! However, instead of scolding or arguing, he dismissed the matter with an extraordinary speech, a speech which had no apparent relation to anything he or any of them had said hitherto.

"I guess the laugh's on me!" were his words, uttered with that semi-humorous dryness which they resented without knowing why; and he addressed Mrs. Van Cleve with a startlingly abrupt change of subject. "Oh, Grandma, tell me again about that time when Grandpa wouldn't buy you that carpet you wanted, will you?"

Six months later, the Van Cleve ladies, like all the other people of unimpeachable integrity, were denouncing the wretched president of the National Loan high and low. They were painfully disappointed in him; they had thought him so *fine*, so *strong* — "but, as you know, Van Cleve dearest, we saw a great deal of him and the family that winter at Pass Christian; and though I shrank from speaking of it, I used sometimes to notice a kind of sly look in Mr. Gebhardt's eyes that rather worried me. And then there was all that *studied* attention to us; I felt an intuitive distrust of it, and kept trying to put it out of my mind —" Mrs. Lucas wrote in a letter that Van Cleve threw aside with an impatient word. Neither his humor nor his philosophy served him much these days; if he had no respect for his late employer, Van still felt a certain liking and a certain pity for him. The friendly associations of ten years are not easily forgotten; and no matter how much

Gebhardt deserved it, nor how imperative Van's desire to do his duty, he did not relish the part he must play. I declare I myself have felt sorry for the poor, visionary, free-handed, warm-hearted, mistaken gentleman; I do not like to think of his blonde beard and his Viking presence haled before a court and jury, and all his dreams and schemes and foolish wrongdoing ruthlessly exposed. (Oh, Xylotite, how many crimes have been committed in thy name! as some wit brilliantly remarked while the investigation was going forward.) Sentiment is of course quite thrown away on such a scoundrel, and anyway it's years since it all happened, and Gebhardt must be "out" by this time, some one was saying the other day, and so has a chance to begin life over again — at seventy! His wife stuck to him through it all.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANOTHER BUSINESS WOMAN

THE Vermont sanatorium did so much for Bob Gilbert that in less than a year he came back looking, to be sure, not fully restored or as if he ever would reach normal health and strength again, but much better than anybody had expected, fleshier, his color tolerably good and cough almost gone; and he himself, as usual, unquenchably sanguine. "Oh, yes, the symptoms were tubercular," he would acknowledge with a fine air of superiority and detachment; "the doctors all told me so. In old times you'd have felt as if your death-warrant had been signed, and would have made your will and laid right down. I believe people died of pure fright as much as of the disease. It's different now; we know so much more about treatment and — and all that. I took it in time, and it never got any real hold on me. Of course they keep telling me to be careful; but I expect to keep even with it, and eventually to get it under. I've always been lucky about that — coming out even, you know, or a little better." And with his laugh, which always ended in a little choke, Robert would change the subject. He never spoke about his health at all unless directly questioned.

He wanted to get something to do at once, and talked very eagerly and insistently about "getting back into harness"; perhaps he was governed as much by a subtle anxiety to have his theories about his renewed health confirmed even to himself, as by any real motive of ambition or industry, for he was not naturally ambitious

or industrious. But now he sought work feverishly, canvassing his friends, haunting offices and salesrooms, attacking all sorts of unlikely people, offering himself for positions he could no more have filled than that of Secretary of State. In fact, it would have been hard to name one for which Bob was qualified, he had had so little training, either business or professional; and his friends were sorely put to it for terms in which to recommend him. They could say that Bob was honest, for, with all his failings, nobody ever knew him to tell a lie, and he would have gone to the gallows sooner than take a cent that was not rightfully his own. Is that all that honesty means? I do not know, but I suspect not. At any rate, one could have sworn with a clear conscience that Robert could be trusted; but when it came to fitness and efficiency and stability —! However, he might keep straight now; at least, he could not go far on his old paths, without his sadly abused body giving out altogether, and that fear might prevail with him, weak and yielding as he was. For the sake of the family every one did his best for Bob; but bad luck — or what he considered bad luck — dogged him unswervingly. For a while he held some sort of small clerk's position with the Antarctic Ice Company, a business enterprise which had collapsed recently, and was being run by a receiver (Stuart Nicholson, the same Mr. Nicholson who was at that time so attentive to Lorrie Gilbert). Bob may have been doing well enough — nobody knew — but anyhow the receivership presently ended, the company got on its legs again, and in the changes of its reorganization, they let Robert go. Then the Park Superintendent, an old friend of his father's, got or made him a place under him at the City Buildings; but unfortunately the Park Superintendent, happening to be a gentleman and an honest man who had been elevated to this civic office "by a fluke" (people said), speedily fell into disfavor with our gang-elected Mayor



and other authorities, and was deposed along with whatever associates he had gathered, in the political shake-up the very next autumn. So there was Robert on the market again. After that, Van Kendrick bestirred himself and found several small jobs of collecting for Bob to do — an absurd effort, really, for if there was a thing on earth for which Bob had not even a vestige of taste or capacity it was running around after other people to make them pay their debts. The idea of that shiftless, easy-going fellow harrying other delinquents as shiftless and easy-going as himself was ludicrous; they could make him believe any cock-and-bull story, or work on his sympathies until he would be ready to empty his own pockets to save theirs! At the end of six months, having conclusively demonstrated how not to do collecting, Bob was out of employment once more. And about this time, it began to be rumored that he was drinking again.

I cannot now recall all his other attempts and failures, nor follow his alternate backslidings and rehabilitations. One met him from time to time, now shabby and run down, now clean and confident, now idle for months, and again working with a hectic energy, full of excitement and enthusiasm, always thin and coughing, yet somehow never seeming to be much worse. It went on for five years; people were constantly prophesying his decline and death and wondering how the family could bear to watch the process, or telling one another with pitying indignation that it was hard to say which must be the more painful and humiliating spectacle for his father and mother and poor Lorrie; Bob on one of hissprees, or Bob sober and half-alive with one lung gone, trying unsuccessfully to support himself in ways the average bright boy of sixteen would disdain. He was assistant to the veterinary surgeon that had the animal hospital on Sycamore Street, at one time; and he tried working with a market-gardener on one of the

little Mill Creek Valley truck-farms; but that only lasted a very short while, for by that time he was not strong enough even for that light labor, and the open-air winter reversed all theories by doing him more harm than good. The last place he had was at the Hotel Preston, the big new hotel put up by the Preston Estate in 1907. It is a handsome establishment in the most approved hotel style with canopies of glass and wrought-iron over the entrances, and half a dozen elegant little shops along the front, where persons of sufficient affluence may buy candies, "gents' furnishings," and rich blue brocade corsets. Within there is a rotunda with frescoes and a musicians' gallery; and many resplendent rooms upstairs occupied mostly by New York tailors and milliners on tour with displays of their goods. Robert was in the small booth near the lesser door for ladies, in charge of the supply of cheap umbrellas which the management benevolently hires out to people who have been caught unprotected in a shower. I saw him there myself when I darted into the Preston in the middle of a storm one day.

There he was, in the hotel uniform and buttons, like the bell-boys, handing out umbrellas, taking the names on little pasteboard checks and putting away the money, with quite a long line of hurried and impatient customers before him whom he served briskly, civilly, and without confusion. We recognized each other at the same instant; and his manners were better than mine, for whereas I stopped short, and hesitated, feeling sickeningly sorry and ashamed, Bob kept a perfectly placid face and matter-of-fact air, nodded with his nice smile, and went on dispensing umbrellas until it came to my turn, as if that were one of the most worthy and suitable of occupations for an educated man, thirty-five years old, and born and bred a gentleman.

"You didn't get wet, I hope. I never saw anything like the sudden way that rain came up," he said when

I reached his counter. He looked about as usual, with a high color and large, brilliant, hollow eyes; and he did not smell at all of whiskey. I do not know why I should have been so unhappily embarrassed, unless it was because I could not keep Professor Gilbert with his Sanskrit and his scholastic dignities out of my head; and Bob's mother with her pretty, waving gray hair; and Bob himself as a boy; and other days, other memories, that were not so very old, as years go, but might have been a century past by comparison. I tried to speak naturally.

"I didn't know you were here, Bob."

"Well, of course you wouldn't be likely to. You don't come in very often, I expect; nobody ever knows much about the hotels in their own town. I've been here two months — ever since it opened," he said simply. "This is a nice one. You have to leave a dollar, you know."

I could think of nothing more to say, so got the money out in silence and watched him put my name down, lingering in a wretched uncertainty. "Why, you're left-handed, aren't you?" I said at last, idiotically, as he tried the umbrella to see if it was in good order, and passed it over.

"Eh? Why no, not naturally. I've been learning to use that arm, on account of having some trouble with my right here recently," he explained indifferently; "some kind of neuralgia or neuritis or something."

The right lung was the one that was gone — or going — undoubtedly; I might have guessed it, and refrained from questions, if I had not been so flustered. After this maladroit effort, I stammered out some sort of good-by and was about to retreat thankfully; but the bad quarter of an hour was not yet ended. Before I could move, a lady stepped out of the azure corset-shop which opened on this corridor near at hand, turned towards the door, saw the rain, and turned back quickly.

She walked up to the umbrella booth. She was dressed in a beautiful dark blue linen suit, that fitted with incomparable snugness over a figure of smooth, unyielding, accurate curves surpassing those of the whale-boned and pompadour-ribboned dummies we could see through the plate-glass doors behind her; her fawn-colored hair was arranged like theirs in regular, petrified waves glossy with brilliantine, under a neat, stiff hat with dark blue quills and ribbons smartly applied. She came up to the stand, and the light struck full on her face, and I would have known her in a thousand. "Can I get an umb —?" she began; and broke short off, staring. It was Paula Jameson — Gilbert — whatever she called herself — Bob's divorced wife; all three of us stood a moment dumb.

I do not know what I should have done — what would have been the proper and humane thing to do, that is; run away as if I were afraid of being caught with them? Or stay as if I wanted to see what they were going to do? Actually I contrived to do neither; it all happened too quickly. Paula — she seemed to be merely surprised, not at all disconcerted — recovered almost at once, and knew me and spoke to me by name; and she said, "Why, hello, Bob!" and put out her hand to him, too!

He took it automatically, and said, "How do you do?" looking at her helplessly. Paula kept on talking, not to relieve the situation, for it was plain she herself felt no awkwardness about it, but as it would seem out of the fulness of her heart! She asked both of us if the folks were well. She inquired after several other people. She said warmly: "Well, this little old burg has waked up at last, hasn't it? Look at the new skyscrapers! And let me tell you there aren't many hotels in this part of the country that have got anything on this one. If they'd only get a bunch of porters with caps and uniforms and numbers down at the Grand

Central to grab your grip when you get off the train, why, the town'd be right up to date!" And she laughed, showing all her teeth, which were as pretty and white and flawless as ever; and a tiny crease in one cheek that used to be a dimple years ago. She was astonishing. I believe the woman was glad to get back here, glad to see us, glad to talk to us. Let me give no false impression; Paula's hail-fellow-well-met manner was not in the least brazen or self-assertive; one sensed a kind of good feeling in her very lack of feeling. She could not be a gentlewoman, nor even look like one; but for all her teetering high heels, and her tortured waist, and her carefully made-up complexion, and the breezy assurance of her address, she was absolutely respectable. Her respectability clothed her visibly, like her blue linen suit; she had the air of being armed and bucklered against the world and the wiles of men, supplied with an arsenal of morals, and ready to open fire at the slightest hostile demonstration.

I edged away at last, and was escaping, but Paula interrupted her eager chatter—she was actually asking Bob what that friend of his, Mr. Kendrick, was doing, and whether he and Lorrie had made a match of it yet!—to run after me. "Oh, do you have to go? Can't you stay a minute? It's raining cats and dogs still," she said, and seized my arm confidentially; "can't you just come upstairs, and let me show you our display? I know you'll like it, and I'd love to show you. The things are awfully pretty, and the very latest wrinkles—right straight from Paree, you know, the swellest ever. Oh, say, do come! Our prices aren't sky-high, either, but anyway you don't have to buy anything, you know; I'd just love to have you see 'em. Say, can't you? Well, all right, then, but I'm going to be here for three days, so you'll come in some other time, won't you? Didn't you get one

of our cards? Well if that ain't the limit! I know you must have been down on our list; we get all the names out of 'Who's Who.' Here, take this one. And say, mention me to your friends, will you? I expect some of them remember me, anyhow. This is the first time I've ever made Cincinnati on a trip, and I'd like to work up a trade here for the firm."

The leaflet she pressed on me was handsomely engraved at the top with a crest, the head of a Roman emperor (to all appearances) enclosed in a wreath, and underneath in minute lettering: "L. Bloch, 325 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y." Farther down it announced in flourishing script that M. Levi Bloch, of Paris, Vienna, and New York, desired to call my attention to the display of samples from his ateliers which would be on view at the Hotel Preston, Parlors A and B, the 24th, 25th, 26th. Corsets, Brassières, Garters, Silk Stockings, Woven and Piece Silk Combinations, etc. Exclusive agents for La Sylphide Empire girdle. Expert fitters would be in attendance, and their representative, Mme. Clarice, would give my order her personal supervision.

"I *wish* you'd come up; you might look around while you're waiting for the rain to hold up, anyhow, couldn't you?" said Paula, nudging me towards the elevator. "Say, come on!" And shrewdly keeping a firm grip on my arm, she turned and called a familiar good-by to Bob, over her shoulder. "See you later!" He did not answer; indeed, he had hardly spoken at all throughout the incident.

Paula piloted me, unresisting, yet inwardly amazed at the feebleness of my compliance, up-stairs and to Parlors A and B, where, in fact, there was a sumptuous parade of Corsets, Brassières, Combinations, and all the rest of it. She had a couple of *mannequins* there, good-looking young women all Marcel waves and glittering finger nails, who surveyed me with the

extraordinary deferential patronage of their kind; and I noticed that Paula herself exhibited that manner to perfection as she guided me about. She put it on like a glove for the benefit of her underlings, holding up one garment after another, and murmuring prices in confidence; and blarneyed me into buying an expensive harness of sky-blue moiré, lace, and silver buckles, which I have never had on from that day to this, in a style no Parisian saleswoman could have bettered. It was inconceivable that "that little Paula Jameson" could have developed into so able and distinguished a personage as Madame Clarice, but such was the fact! And in a moment when we were alone, I had the hardihood to ask her a question or two about the process.

She was not in the least offended; I think she took my curiosity and surprise rather as a compliment! "Why, I just kind of fell into it," she said. "I've been in it now for four years. I had to do *something*, you know. After Momma died—that was in nineteen-two—no, three—I've lost count, but it was along there some time—well, after she died, I found we just didn't have anything left. We'd lived it all up. Momma didn't know much, and she didn't raise me to know much, either.—Very well, Ongriette, you can go to your luncheon now, and right afterwards I want you to take those garters up to show the lady in 217 that was in this morning. Tell her we can match any color of corset or silk lawngerie she selects; it's so chick to have everything underneath match." And as the girl departed, Paula, who had momentarily resumed her saleswoman's elegance of deportment, turned to me, relaxing again.

"We'd simply lived everything clean up. Momma never did have much head-piece, you know," she explained impartially. "She'd got to be in poor health, and it was a good thing she died when she did; she'd

have been an awful drag on me. I couldn't have taken care of her and made a living for both of us, too. As it was, she died and never knew a thing about it. But my, you haven't any idea what a time I had afterwards! Why, I had to sell some jewellery to bury her with. Hey? Why, we were in N'Yawk. I went and got a room in one of those perfectly punk boarding-houses down near Washington Square. You haven't any *idea* what a time I had! I didn't know what to do, and anyway there wasn't a thing I *could* do — not even sewing or cooking. If I hadn't had luck, I bet I'd have been scrubbing floors this minute. First I thought of going on the stage; but pretty soon I saw that wasn't any good. You can hang around the theatrical agencies and offices, and hang around 'em, and *hang* around 'em, till your feet drop off, and you'll never get a look-in, unless you've a friend with a pull. You know the kind of *friend* I mean." She paused significantly, and I nodded.

"Well, I wasn't that kind," Madame Clarice went on, a certain hardness settling about her still lovely mouth. "Of course I *could* have —!" She shrugged. "But what's the use? I just felt as if I was good and done with men. When they come around me now, I just tell 'em all nix on that talk. It don't go with *me*. I've seen too much. I don't want anything more to do with any man, except in a business way, of course. I must say that when a man's got his head set on business, he's, generally speaking, a perfect gentleman. Well, as I was telling you, there I was in N'Yawk, in a hall-bedroom, you know, without a cent and scared to death every time I heard the landlady coming upstairs. Then one day I had an idea. I got it from something I heard a girl say in one of the dramatic-bureau places I'd been going to. She was a chorus-girl, I guess — looked it anyhow; and I heard her telling the man that she'd been in a coat-and-suit model



job over on Sixth Avenue, ever since the 'June Roses' show broke up.

"That interested me, because I always *have* wanted to know what they did in between times, haven't you? That's where I got my idea, too. I just thought, 'Why shouldn't I be a coat-and-suit-model? They get good money, and nothing to do but stand around and be looked at. And I've got enough better figure than that chorus-girl.' So one day I put on my things and started out.

"Well, it wasn't so easy as I thought, but I finally did land a job with a ladies' tailor named Blitz on Thirty-second, near Broadway. His head-woman was sick, and they took me just to fill in while she was away. What he wanted was more of a saleslady to show the things, and sort of jolly people along than a model. It wasn't a real swell place like they have on the Avenue — like this one, you know —" And here Paula sent around a glance of proud satisfaction which was, on the whole, rather agreeable to see. She got up and rearranged a negligée of opalescent-tinted crêpe and silver embroidery, so that it would show to better advantage, laid carelessly over one of the gilded Empire chairs of Parlor A; eyed the effect a second, with her head on one side, touched the folds here and there, and returned to her chair and narrative.

"Of course I was pretty green at first, but by the time I'd been there six weeks, I could see I was making good with Blitz. He was business clear through; kept tab on your sales, and got every ounce of work you held out of you. However, the head lady came back one day, and she hadn't been in the place a half hour before I knew it would presently be here's your-hat-what's-your-hurry for me. Mad! And jealous! *Whee!* And the worst of it was she was too good herself for Blitz to get rid of her. Smart as a steel trap, you know, sell you the whole stock without your know-

ing it; just hypnotized you into buying. I learned a good deal watching her. My, I've often thought how mad it would have made her to know I was getting a line on all her ways, and seeing where I could improve on 'em! When it came to looks, I had the biggest kind of a lead over her, and I guess that's one of the things that made her sorest. I was more refined style, you know, and that's very hard to get always; you don't see a real refined one every day.

"However, by that time, I'd made some acquaintances in the trade; so when I left Blitz, I didn't have any trouble at all scarcely. I went right over to the Lawngerie Department at Altman's. But I hadn't been there any time at all before a man I'd met that was in *passementerie* and fine trimmings came to me and says: 'Look here, what you doing here? This ain't any place for you.' 'Well,' I says, 'what I'm doing is getting my little fifteen a week. Any place where I can make that is the place for me, according to the way I figure it.' He just laughed. He says: 'Fifteen! Why, you're too good for that. Now I've got a friend,' he says, 'with the *Maison Bloch*, name of Sweeny, he's their head-man there, and he's looking for somebody like you. You can put it all over any saleslady he's got. Just look at your form for one thing; form's everything in the corset trade. Tell 'em you wear the *La Délice* or the *Cleo* or the *X.Y.Z.* or any old style you choose, and they look at your form and fall for it every time. Now I want to take you around and introduce you to Sweeny.' Of course I knew that meant I was to throw Sweeny's trade his way all I could, but I'd just as lief. He had a first-class line of goods, and one good turn deserves another, don't it? So we went over to see Sweeny, and sure enough, didn't he engage me right off! Only thing he said to me was: 'Say, you got to can that name. You don't want to be *Mrs.* Anybody — you've got

to be *Madame* Something, or just a single name like Louise or Charlotte or Adelaide; that's the nifty thing to do.' So we decided on Madame Clarice. I think it sounds swell, don't you? Madame Clarice."

I expressed due admiration; and we sat silent a moment, Paula thoughtfully moving and replacing the charming little sachet-bags, jabots, and odds and ends spread out on the table near her.

"It's been easy for you ever since, I suppose?" said I, at length.

"Yes, oh, yes. Well, of course, I've got to keep on the job every minute; believe me, I *work*. But I haven't had any trouble; I've gone right along. I make two trips a year, South in winter — Palm Beach, and all the resorts, you know — and North in summer. It's funny I never happened to come here before, but I believe the management have got a notion it isn't a likely place. Anyway, they never put it in my route. You don't know how queer it seemed to-day — same old town, but everything different!"

She was silent, playing with the trifles, and then spoke abruptly: "Bob Gilbert looks awfully, don't he? I don't believe he'll live long."

She said this with an air of detached and impersonal observation startling to witness. Whatever their experiences together had been, it was evident that Paula cherished no resentment, no feeling of any kind, about her ex-husband. She regarded him with an amiable indifference. While I was still sitting in a wordless confusion, she added with much more earnestness: "Lorrie hasn't ever got married, he said. I wonder why. Do you suppose it's because of her having been engaged to — to —?"

"To that Mr. Cortwright, that was killed in the Spanish War?" I supplied, seeing her hesitate; "why, yes, that's what everybody thinks."

"I thought sure she'd marry Mr. Kendrick," said

Paula, gazing into space with a meditative frown. She caught sight of herself in a mirror, and gave a sound of consternation. "My, I've got into such a bad habit of frowning that way! Ain't it awful? I'll have my forehead full of wrinkles if I don't look out." She rubbed her finger-tips across it anxiously.

Some customers coming in just then, this was the end of the interview; and I did not see Madame Clarice again, although she invited me very urgently, and kissed me at parting! It was to be feared that she had diagnosed Bob's case accurately; for going to the Preston next day to turn over the umbrella, I encountered a stylishly trim young woman at the booth in his place. And in answer to my inquiry she told me that the regular clerk had been taken sick yesterday afternoon and had to be sent home.

"I guess he's pretty bad off. They had the house doctor to fix him up, and he took him out to where he lives in a cab. I heard 'em say he had a hemorrhage, or was going to have one," she said.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN WHICH WE CALL AT THE GILBERTS'

ROBERT was indeed very sick. The attack might have been attributed to the shock of the sudden encounter with his wife, but the family doctor, hearing of it, shook his head. It was a coincidence, he said, nothing more; the machinery was worn out, and must have been upon the verge of breaking down this long while. Of course, it was impossible to say — sometimes these cases contradict all previous experience — Bob might live for several months, even for a year — or he might drop off to-morrow. The only thing to do was to try to keep him contented and in ignorance; there would probably be times when he would feel a little better and would get restless and want to get around or go back to work, but that wouldn't last, he was physically too weak. Just don't cross him; let him do what he could, in reason. If he got to talking about going away somewhere and trying some other climate as he had done before, just put him off; any excuse would do. He was not likely to suffer acutely; oh, yes, he could eat anything, give him anything he liked. As long as the weather was pleasant this way, he might stay out on the porch most of the time; they could arrange a couch or a reclining chair for him out there. The doctor would look in occasionally, but, frankly, there was nothing he could do — nothing anybody could do. He looked at Lorrie and her mother standing, each with her cold hands clasped tight together, listening to him as if he had been, what

surely all good doctors are, a kind of deputy-Deity — the doctor looked at the women gravely and kindly, and got into his buggy and drove away.

This sad news being presently spread abroad, all the friends of the family — and the Gilberts had made a great many warm and devoted and steadfast friendships — were quick to show their sympathy, though nearly every one privately was of the opinion that Bob's death would be a merciful release. The poor fellow never would have reformed, probably could not, and there was nobody who could be better spared; he had never been anything but a care and a disgrace to his people, to everybody that ever had anything to do with him. But all that ought to be forgotten now. Persons who had long ago stopped asking after him, or recognizing him on the street, now called at the house, brought kind-hearted offerings of books and fruit and jellies and bottles of wine and air-pillows, recommended other physicians and wonderful new treatments, hoped the family wouldn't hesitate to call on them in case they needed outside help — things that nurses and doctors couldn't do, you know. They came and insisted on taking Lorrie out in their motor-cars, whenever she could leave the invalid. Sometimes they saw him, for a few minutes; he had his days of feeling better or worse. Girls he had gone to school with, married women now with boys of their own, came to visit him, putting aside the fact that they had not spoken to him in years; but they always had liked Bob Gilbert, they said, he was so nice when — when he was all right. Even little old Miss Harriet Peck, the primmest mortal on earth, who would have run from the mere sight of Robert (even sober) a while ago, now ventured to the house and sent in her maidenly card with a tidy little nosegay of heliotrope and lemon-verbena. She had been his Sunday-school teacher twenty-five years before. "And I never did know my Collect," the sick man said,

surveying the gift with a grin; "she must have forgiven me. Does she wear that funny little pancake bonnet with the gilt arrow stuck through a bow in front still, Lorrie? I'd like to see Miss Harriet; can't I see her?"

"She's gone. I don't believe she was quite certain about the propriety of calling on a gentleman, especially after I told her you were lying down," said Lorrie, quickly. The fact was, she had actively discouraged Miss Peck, who had arrived with a Testament under one arm, eager to administer the consolations of religion to her old-time pupil in his extremity.

"As soon as I'm well enough, I'll go around and see the old girl. It was very kind of her to come," Robert declared. "Everybody's kind, seems to me. I'll have lots of calls to make. You come with me, will you, Lorrie?"

"Why, of course, I'd love to," said Lorrie, smiling bravely.

It was in the first week of Bob's sickness that they had one visitor whom it never would have occurred to them to expect. Robert, as the doctor had prophesied, rallied with uncanny swiftness, and already they had conveyed him to a cot on the side-porch, and his mother and sister were sitting there with him, in the mild sunshine — it was in September — Lorrie reading aloud from the morning paper, and Mrs. Gilbert constructing the first of a series of fine outing-flannel night-shirts which she was confident she could make better and infinitely cheaper than the men's haberdashers. It was strange how quickly the household had adjusted itself to the idea of illness. Bob lay there quietly, comfortably, not looking so very sick. I am not sure that there was not an obscure content somewhere in the depths of his mother's heart to have him at home at last and secure; it was hard to believe that he could not go on forever

in this state, being cared for, petted, watched over; she was almost happy as she planned his night-shirts.

As they sat there, they heard the bell ring, and heard the servant's footsteps going through the hall and some low-voiced talk at the front door. "There's the post-man," Bob said. But some one came, apparently with an anxious caution, into the sitting-room, which opened with a long window on the porch; and directly their maid spoke from the door. "It's a lady to see you, Miss Lorrie. She didn't give any card. She just said she wanted to see you," said the girl.

Lorrie put down the newspaper, and rose with a faint grimace. "They're always coming in like that, on tiptoe and holding their breath as if — as if —. Can't they see that the real kindness would be to behave as if nothing were the matter?" she said to herself impatiently. She went into the room, which was darkened by the vines and roof outside, and, making out only a silhouette of the visitor standing in an uncertain attitude by the door, spoke with a cheerfulness that, had she known it, was almost as artificial as the other's labored solicitude. "How do you do? I can't see who it is; everything looks all black and green, coming in here out of the light — but how do you do, anyhow!" said Lorrie, gayly. "Is it Mrs. —?" Her lips stiffened on the words; she had gone up quite close to the other, but stopped stock-still with her hand yet outstretched.

"I guess you weren't expecting to see *me*," said Paula. She looked at Lorrie's hand, advanced her own awkwardly, then withdrew it and began to fumble with the clasps and chains of two or three silver trifles that dangled from her wrist — a purse, lorgnette, and what-not. She shifted her parasol to the curve of her other arm, and pulled at the edge of her veil, glancing around the room with a kind of cringing resolution. "I knew you'd be surprised to see me," she repeated; "I didn't



suppose you'd want to, but I—I came, anyhow, Lorrie."

"Don't speak so loud," said Lorrie.

"I won't—I didn't mean to—" said Paula, faltering and shrinking.

"My brother is just outside the window. I don't want him to hear you suddenly. He's very sick," said Lorrie, more gently.

"I know. I knew he was sick. I don't want to see him. I didn't come to see him," Paula whispered hastily and urgently; she even retreated a step in visible fright. "I don't want to see him. I came to see *you*, Lorrie."

On a common impulse, they moved a yard or so farther away, into the hall. In the stronger light Paula examined the other half furtively, half openly, with a strangely mixed expression combining fear, curiosity, bravado, and something that might almost have been construed as regard. Her accurately fashionable dress, her little groomed and petted body with all its good points so carefully cherished and exhibited, noticeable enough elsewhere, somehow lost all distinction and significance in Lorrie's presence, and she herself seemed dimly to realize it, but without envy. "Lorrie Gilbert, you haven't changed a bit—not a speck!" she declared; "my, I wish I had your complexion! It's the way you live, I suppose. Tell you, New York'll get away with anybody's looks, no matter how careful they are."

"Hush! Bob will hear you," Lorrie warned her again, and drew the door shut.

"Oh, you don't think he could, do you? I hope *not*. I—I don't want to see him, Lorrie," said Paula, in a panic. "I heard he was going to die—I don't want to see him. It's true, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's true," Lorrie said. As she surveyed Paula, she found herself on a sudden thinking of her with all the old tolerance and pity. Poor Paula,

poor dull creature with her vanity, her petty shrewdness, her unconscious brutality, her wofully cheap morals, poor Paula! It was like her to be afraid of Bob because he was dying, like her to come here to this house that was associated with an experience so shameful no other woman could have even thought of it, much less seen it, without invincible shrinking. Merciful Heaven, she had not entered it thus since that day, nearly ten years before, when Lorrie had taken her, sick and sorry, back to the hotel; she had not even seen Lorrie since the marriage. Here she stood, uneasy, ingratiating, not really callous, not really coarse, only immutably self-absorbed.

"Can't we go somewhere and talk, where he can't hear us?" Paula questioned; "I'd love to have a good long talk with you, Lorrie. I came because I wanted to talk to you."

"We can go up-stairs to my room —"

"Well, are you sure he won't hear us? I don't want him to know I'm here," said Paula, a little timorously. "He looked awfully badly the other day. Did he tell you he had seen me? Did he say anything about me?"

"Yes, he said you were at the hotel. He said you were travelling for a firm of ladies' tailors," said Lorrie, leading the way.

"Well, he didn't get it quite right, but that was near enough, for a *man*, I guess. Hello, it's your same old room!"

Lorrie silently brought forward a couple of chairs, but the other did not at once sit down. Instead, she flitted lightly about the room, inspecting and commenting on the pictures and bits of ornaments, new and old, the wall-paper, the curtains, the pincushion — "I see you're doing that eyelet-work; that's your own work, isn't it? I've got a friend that does the most simply gorgeous Irish crochet. She's got her bureau-

scarfs all made of it, and a handkerchief-bedspread, the squares all put together with Irish inserting, and pink China-silk lining showing through — perfectly elegant. The same thing would have cost forty-five dollars at McCutcheon's; I priced one. Say, you've changed your desk, haven't you? Didn't it use to be over there by the mantelpiece? Oh!" She paused by the desk, picking up a photograph in a silver frame that Lorrie always kept standing in the middle of the little shelf; her voice changed slightly as she said: "That's *him*, isn't it, Lorrie? Isn't it Mr. Cortwright?"

"Yes."

Paula carefully relaxed her smart, tightly-drawn, dotted white veil, and pushed it up, and studied the picture for a long while. "It's in that Rough Riders' uniform. He must have had it taken just before he went to the war." She turned it over and read aloud, "'Dearest, from Phil.'" Her face twitched momentarily. Then she set the frame down again. "Law me, what fools everybody is when they're real young!" she said musingly. And there was a silence in the little room for half a minute.

Paula went to the glass and readjusted her veil with care. She sat down deliberately, facing Lorrie; and when she spoke, Lorrie noticed a certain assurance and maturity in her manner that had been lacking at the first. Nobody would conceive of a New York *corsetière's* establishment as a school for the development of character; yet one cannot become Madame Clarice, head saleswoman of a fashionable importing-house, without having acquired some poise, initiative, and understanding of one's neighbor.

"Lorrie," Paula said; "I suppose you think it's funny my coming to see you this way, after everything that's happened. But I wanted to see you. I always liked you, Lorrie. I liked you even when

I hated you — if you know what I mean. Girls are so funny."

Lorrie had no declaration or confession to make in return; she sat without answering, scarcely even surprised.

"You don't hold it up against me, about Bob, do you? You don't hold that against me?" said Paula, with unexpected earnestness.

"You mean your being married to him? Why no, Paula. How could I dislike you, or feel any resentment against *you* about that?" said Lorrie, startled and distressed. "Bob did you a dreadful wrong. The first thing we all thought of was that he must set it right. It doesn't make any difference that he's my brother. We — I've never thought of such a thing as blaming *you* for it."

"Well, *I'd* have hated it, if I'd been in your place," said Paula, honestly. "Why, I even hated the whole thing at the time, but I couldn't help myself." She leaned forward and spoke with emphasis. "You know, Lorrie, there's one thing I've always wanted you to know, only I never had a chance to tell you, and somehow I couldn't write it. I never was good at writing; and I was afraid I couldn't say it so you'd believe me. But it's just this: if I'd been left to myself, I'd never have hooked on to Bob Gilbert that way. I'd never have done it in this wide world. It was Momma that did it. I told her afterwards, often and often, that it didn't need to have been done at all. If I could have known beforehand that the baby was going to die — you knew it was born dead —?"

Lorrie uttered a sound of assent. She could not have spoken articulately.

"If I could only have known that beforehand, I wouldn't *ever* have hooked on to Bob. There wouldn't have been any particular use, you see. Momma and I could just have gone away from here and come back

again, and nobody would have been one bit wiser. I kept thinking: What am I going to do with that baby? And as it turned out, I didn't need to bother at all!"

Lorrie gazed at her, dumb. She was conscious with horror of a desire to laugh, yet there was a sob in her throat. Oh, it was too grotesque, it was too pitiable! About Paula's intention, there was a crooked fairness immeasurably pathetic; yet by every word she said Lorrie felt all womankind to be humiliated and debased.

"If I could only have known, I wouldn't have let Momma rope him into getting married. But I didn't know. I couldn't tell the baby was going to die," Paula said over again; "you believe me, don't you, Lorrie?" she asked, in earnest apology.

"Of course I believe you, Paula," said Lorrie, with difficulty. The tears stood in her eyes.

Paula sat back with a long breath. "I always wanted you to know. When the baby was born, and they found it was dead, that was the first thing I thought of. I thought: There now, all the fuss was for nothing! Well, I did the best I could. I went to a lawyer, and got him to tell me what was the best way to get a divorce without having any talk, or having to tell anything. I had to pay him a lot, too. So I took his advice and waited three years, and then got it, you know; and I told the other lawyers that I wanted it fixed so that your brother could marry again if he wanted to, same as myself. I don't know whether they did it or not, but that's what I told 'em, anyway. And I want to say, Lorrie, that your brother's always been as nice a little gentleman as anybody'd want to know. He's *all right*, and I want you to know I think so."

Lorrie had a sensation as of a person groping vainly in some unlit labyrinth. She had reached a point where she could not follow the processes of Paula's mind; at every turn some stone wall of complete in-

comprehensibility baffled her. Surely any other woman in Paula's position would have either hated Bob or loved him; it was incredible that she could pronounce him, with this obvious friendly conviction, "all right." It was incredible, but it was so!

"Now *you* tell me something about *yourself*," said Paula, shifting her ground with surprising suddenness. "I thought you'd be married by this time. Why didn't you, Lorrie?" She spoke with energy; it had the effect of an accusation, rather than an inquiry.

"I didn't want to. I don't want to," Lorrie answered, gathering herself together after a moment's effort.

The other eyed her sharply. "You've had some more offers, haven't you?" she demanded; "I guess they don't come along so thick as they used to; but you've held your looks pretty well, Lorrie. I bet you've had some more offers. Don't that Mr. Kendrick want to marry you still? He used to."

"Why — I — he — he —"

"I knew he did," said Paula, triumphantly. "Why don't you take him? He's always been crazy about you; and he must be pretty well fixed now. Of course, it's all right to keep a man hanging around for a while, so's he won't ever get to feeling sure of you," she interpolated liberally; "but you don't want to take *too* long about it. Men are kind of queer, and he *might* get tired of waiting, and go off to somebody else."

"You don't understand. I don't want to marry any one. I shall never marry any one. And I will ask you not to talk to me any more about it, Paula. You know I don't like you to," said Lorrie, fairly incensed. Paula, however, looked at her flushed and mortified face quite unmoved.

"I guess you think I've got my nerve," she commented dispassionately. "Suppose I told you that was one of the things I came here to see you about?"

To ask about you and Kendrick, I mean. Suppose I told you that, what'd you say?"

"I would tell you that it was a great piece of impertinence!" said Lorrie, at the end of her self-command. She tried to steady herself. "It seems as if you can't be *made* to understand that this isn't a mere pretence with me. I *mean* it when I tell you I don't like it. It's an insult to Mr. Kendrick and myself both. He —" she choked; all at once she found herself angered to the point of tears on Van Cleve's account. He was *above* being gabbled about this way; above all this contemptible gossip about getting tired of waiting, and going off to some one else!

Paula, on the other hand, kept her temper admirably; she had always been of an equable disposition, and doubtless the years she had spent catering to M. Levi Bloch's customers had taught her the value of a surface amiability, at any rate. "Maybe it *is* an impertinence. Maybe who you marry or don't marry is none of my business," she said tranquilly; and rose with well-controlled movements. "But I'll tell you one thing, Lorrie Gilbert, if you're holding off and meaning to die an old maid because of *him* —" she pointed with a negligent gesture of her parasol to the photograph of Lorrie's dead lover which was impassively witnessing this scene, from its stand on the desk — "if it's because of *him*, you're making the mistake of your life. Would he have done it for you? Not much! *Not much* he wouldn't have! Why, you were only one of a dozen with him. If you'd been married, you'd have found out about Phil Cortwright. He'd have got tired of you in a month —"

"Paula, *stop!* How dare — how can — how —" Lorrie's voice failed in stark anger. She could not get out another word; her whole frame trembled. She darted to the desk and snatched the photograph up, holding it against her breast with a fierce movement.

She hardly knew what she was doing, save defending her most sacred memories against this sacrilegious voice and presence.

"If you scream out that way, your brother or somebody will hear," said Paula, disturbed for the first time. She lowered her voice, glancing towards the door. "He wouldn't want me to tell you, anyhow. He made me promise not to. But what does a promise like that amount to? I was in such a fix I'd have sworn black was white!" She went closer to Lorrie and whispered something with a sort of cold vehemence.

Although she heard, Lorrie for a second did not understand; the words beat idly about her ears like the fluttering of a bat's wings at night. Paula spoke again; and then Lorrie gave a wild and inarticulate sound of denial. "No, *no!*" — she gasped; and stared speechlessly at the other, her color slowly fading.

"It's the *truth*. My God, Lorrie, don't look that way! I can't help it now. It's the *truth*." Paula's own face showed ashen-gray through all her paint; the effort she was making taxed all her meagre reserves of character; but she spoke with a force of voice and manner that vanquished doubt.

"What call would I have to come here and lie to you? It's the *truth*. I can prove it. I've got letters from him. I can prove it if you don't believe me. Or you can go and ask your brother. Ask your brother, and see what he says."

Lorrie made a negative motion with her head; she tried to speak with lips that moved as if of lead. The picture slid out of her hands to the floor. Paula seized her arm with an exclamation.

"Goodness, Lorrie, don't faint, whatever you do! For mercy's sake, don't faint! Somebody will come up here to see what's the matter, and then we'll have a *time*. Here, what do you take when you feel sick?



Haven't you got any whiskey? What's that on the wash-stand? If it was ammonia, it might do. Gracious, I don't know what to do!" She held to Lorrie's elbow, gazing about in utter perplexity and helplessness. "I never *could* do anything for any person that was sick. Would you like some water? I can get some if you'll tell me where it is," she suggested uncertainly, as Lorrie slowly lapsed into a chair.

"No. Never mind." Lorrie put up her hand to her forehead, and felt the chilly moisture beading there, with dull wonder. She drew herself upright, with an inconceivable effort, clutching at the ledge of the desk. Paula sat down opposite, surveying her uneasily.

"It's the *truth* —" she was reiterating, when Lorrie raised one hand unsteadily.

"I believe you," she said.

For an instant, Paula seemed almost frightened at the ease of her victory; then she began volubly and eagerly. "I expect you think it's funny about your brother. Well, it *is* funny. Because he never touched me. Bob Gilbert never touched me, he never had anything to do with me. I'm telling you God's truth, Lorrie. It was the other all the time. I was a fool, of course. I thought it was because of me he was coming here all the time, making out he was calling on *you*. I thought it was to get a chance to see me outside the hotel, you know. And don't you remember how he used always to take me home? I believed everything he told me. I guess you know how that was yourself. *You* believed him, too. We used to meet other places. I didn't know he was engaged to you, or thinking of it, till — till after everything had happened, and I — I was in that awful fix. Oh, I was a fool all right! I bet I wasn't the first one he'd fooled either —"

"Don't!" said Lorrie, faintly. And Paula, looking

into her face, was obediently silent. After some time, Lorrie said: "Bob —?"

"I never put it on him. Lorrie, I wouldn't have thought of *him* — why — why — I just wouldn't have *thought* of him!" cried out the other, violently earnest. "I tell you Bob never came near me *that way*, and I never said he did. It was Momma. When I owned up to her what was the matter with me, she acted clean crazy. She kept tormenting me to know who the man was, and when I wouldn't tell her, she kept asking, 'Is it *him*?' 'Is it *him*?' one man's name after another, till she'd gone over all the men we knew. I kept saying: 'No, it ain't. I'm not going to tell you who it was!' And then something in the way I said it made her think it was your brother, and she got up and went off like a flash to your house and I couldn't stop her."

"She told us it was Bob. We believed it," said Lorrie, her face contracting. "We oughtn't to have been so quick to believe it about him. I can see that now. But afterwards, why did he —?" She looked at the other, mutely questioning.

"That's what *I* couldn't make out, when you wrote you'd got hold of him down there in Cuba, and he was going to come home with you and marry me. I *couldn't* make it out; I couldn't *think* why he did it! It looked like he was crazy too!" said Paula, sincerely; "I had been expecting the real truth would come out when you got hold of your brother. At least you'd know it wasn't *him*. But I didn't care much. I was feeling too awfully. There wasn't any use *my* telling. *He* — the other one — the real one, you know —" for some reason she shrank from pronouncing Cortwright's name again — "*he* wouldn't come back here and marry me. I'd written to him. Oh, yes, he *knew*. I'd told him — I'd written him over and over again. But he was through with me, that was all. He didn't care

what became of me. He knew I wouldn't ever tell; he knew I'd be afraid to. And then he got shot, so that settled it, anyhow. Then your brother came home, and your father brought him down to Clarksburg, that little place in Indiana where Momma and I were. I was glad it was just your father and mother that came; I didn't want to see *you*. They got a minister and a license right off. Before we were married, though, everybody went away and left your brother and I alone together — I suppose they thought we'd want to do some love making," said Paula, dully ironical; "anyway they left us alone in the room. I said to him: 'What are you doing it for?' Just like that. I couldn't think of anything else. He knew what I meant, of course. He said: 'I found out about you and Cort. It was an accident — I didn't mean to — but I found out. I've got all those letters you wrote him. Here they are. You better burn 'em up.' Then I said again: 'But what are you doing it for?' He said: 'I don't want my sister ever to know. It would kill Lorrie. You must promise me you won't ever tell Lorrie.' He said more, but I forget what it was now; it was about the same, I guess. He was afraid for you to know. So I promised him, and we were married."

Lorrie heard her with a sharp pang of contrition. She really had no cause for self-reproach; her affection for her brother, her kindness, her forbearance, had been as constant as the sunlight. And about Bob's own self-sacrifice there had been nothing commendable, nothing heroic; it was merely foolish, Lorrie recognized that. Nevertheless it was with an aching regret that she cast back over all the years that they had condemned and misjudged him. "Oh, poor, poor Bob! I wouldn't have died of it. People don't die of things like that," she said. The idol she had served and cherished lay in fragments at her feet; but, strangely

enough, Lorrie faced the spectacle with far less pain than that with which she thought of Robert, and his generous folly. How could they ever have believed it of him in the first place? It was clean out of his character, couldn't they have *seen* that? she asked herself in futile sorrow and impatience. She wanted to go and get down on her knees and beg Bob to forgive her.

"Well, anyway, he didn't want you to know," Paula said, answering her last words. "After we were married he stayed around about a month, just for the looks of the thing, you know. But nobody ever suspected, even Momma, though she was right with us. I guess you remember about his being taken with his lungs, and having to go to Colorado — you remember when that was? We've scarcely ever seen each other since. But he was always a perfect gentleman, Lorrie. He never said another word to me about *him*, nor threw it at me what I'd done, nor anything, not even when he was drunk."

There was another long silence. Paula began arranging her gloves and veil preparatory to departure, and at last rose, shaking out her skirts with careful, preening fingers.

"Well, that's all. I guess I'll be moving," she announced; and as Lorrie did not speak, paused, looking at her with renewed uneasiness and suspicion. "Of course I haven't got any of the letters *he* wrote with me. I don't take 'em around when I'm on the road. But I can send and have 'em sent to you. They're all in my desk in the flat in N'Yawk. I'll send for 'em if you don't believe me, Lorrie."

"I don't want to see them," said Lorrie.

"You really don't need to, anyhow. You can just ask your brother," Paula advised practically; "it can't harm him now to know that you know all about it. He's too far gone. When I saw him the other

day, I don't know how it was, but it just came over me that I ought to tell you. He's going to die, and I couldn't help hating to think of Bob Gilbert dying and his folks still thinking that about him. I don't know why, but I just couldn't bear the idea," said Paula, stopping a moment to consider this phenomenon. "And besides, I heard you weren't married yet, and I thought to myself, 'I bet I know why!' And you know, Lorrie, it did seem to me too silly for you to give up that way, because of *him*. It seemed like you ought to know about him. Well, good-by. Oh, my, *excuse me!* I've stepped right square on it! Is the frame broken? Why, isn't that awful! Do excuse me! I didn't see it."

"It's no matter," Lorrie said in an expressionless voice. After Paula had gone, she went with slow steps back to the room and picked up the broken photograph and the glass which the other's high French heel had ground to crumbs, and sat awhile, thinking of her destroyed illusions with a kind of compassion. Suddenly she felt that what she had just heard was no revelation; it was something she had always dimly known and tried with a pitiful defiance to keep herself from knowing. She viewed herself in a strange detachment. That girl who had been engaged to Philip Cortwright, that poor thing who had had to learn of his death in so cruel a way, who had kept faith with him all these years, who had resolutely turned away from other devotion — that woman had loved her hero; but she had never trusted him. There was a side of his life, a side of his character, she had steadily refused to see; yet she knew it was there all the time — oh, she knew it! Lorrie remembered with ineffable shrinking, having recited to herself the common, petty bit of feminine cynicism that all men —. How could she ever have pretended to believe that? Why, their poor Bob, poor, dull, weak, self-indulgent, characterless

Bob, was too strong, too decent for *that!* Hot humiliation suffused her anew. She got up with a violent movement, and went to her desk.

A while later, Mrs. Gilbert came up-stairs to answer the telephone; she paused at the threshold, and, glancing in, exclaimed aloud: "Lorrie! You're not building a fire? It's not cool enough yet for *that!*"

"No, I'm only burning some things," said Lorrie. She was sitting before the hearth with her chin in her hand, staring at the dying embers. Mrs. Gilbert came farther in, eyeing the dismantled desk.

"Old letters?" she queried innocently. "It looks as if you had rummaged all the drawers, and cleaned out everything. I *thought* I smelled smoke. Photographs are slow to burn, aren't they? Why, your mantelpiece is almost bare! You've changed everything — no, here's Van Cleve's picture in the same place. You're not going to burn *that* up, I hope, Lorrie."

Lorrie looked up. Van Cleve's photograph, one of the few he had ever had taken, had always stood in the middle of her mantelshelf, and stood there now, its harsh features and direct gaze facing her — a homely picture of a homely man. Lorrie's eyes suddenly filled up; to her mother's surprise and alarm, she began to sob heavily. "No, no, I sha'n't change Van Cleve, Mother — nobody can change Van Cleve. *He'll* always be the same — always, always."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE END OF THE TETHER

OF all the family, Robert himself was the least moved when it was made known that Paula had been there at the house, and the object of her visit revealed. He was surprised and disconcerted, and swore once or twice amiably, under his breath. "Well, that's the last thing in the world I would have expected! What the mischief did she want to do that for? Oh, yes — yes, it's true. She's gone to work and told the whole thing, so there's no use *my* talking. But what possessed her?" he ejaculated in futile inquiry. His strongest emotion appeared to be a vexed embarrassment, which, however, gave away instantly to concern on seeing his mother's face.

"Why, Moms, why, what's the matter? Don't cry that way!" he said in distress; "you couldn't help believing it. What else could you think? Wronged? Wronged who? Wronged *me*? Bosh, you didn't do anything of the kind! It's all right. It didn't make any difference about *me*. I'm a little glad, now it's all over, to have you know that I'm not that sort of a fellow. I wouldn't ever have treated any girl that way," said Bob, earnestly, apparently thinking it necessary to clear up this point. "I — why, I just wouldn't have *wanted* to, you know. I wouldn't ever have *wanted* to, that's all! I hoped it would never be known how it really was, on Lorrie's account. Seemed to me that was the least I could do for Lorrie. And I always liked Cort. And he was dead, you know — and you all thought it was me, anyhow —"

"Don't, Bob! And don't say anything more about that man!" Mrs. Gilbert cried indignantly through her tears. "He was the one that took you away from us in the beginning, and — and led you into doing things you wouldn't have done by yourself. You *know* he did. He was a bad man, Bob, I always felt he was, only Lorrie cared for him, and so —. But he was a bad man —"

"I liked him, anyhow, Mother. You mustn't talk to me about Cort," Bob interposed with so unwonted a gravity that she broke off, rather frightened. All the doctor's cautions crowded into her mind.

"I don't mean — that is, I —" she stammered, with a sob.

"I know," said Bob, and took her hand affectionately into his own thin, hot grasp. "You don't understand how men are sometimes, I believe. Cort and I were pretty good friends, that's all. I think perhaps women aren't ever friends the same way men are. A fellow that knows all about you, and likes you in spite of it — that's a friend. Like old Van, you know. He's the best friend I've got — and he knows me like a book!"

"Why, of course, Bob — of *course* Van Cleve likes you! But that's *different*. It's not the same thing at all!" cried his mother, puzzled, and resentful of this classification; "you talk about yourself as if you were — as if you were —"

"No good? Well, I'm not!" Bob said easily; "at least I haven't been up to now. But thank the Lord it isn't too late! This last attack has been a good lesson to me, Moms. I mean to brace up. When I get well and get out of this bed, you're all going to see a big change in me. There's room for it. I'm going to brace up and *work* and — and make something of myself!" The face he turned towards her was full of enthusiasm; he looked, for a fugitive instant, like a boy again.



"Lorrie says Van Cleve ought to know about this, too," Mrs. Gilbert said after a while; "she wanted you to tell him."

"Van? Oh, I don't know. He doesn't mind, you know. I don't see why he need be told," said Robert with indifference; "however, if Lorrie wants me to — And after all, Van took a deal of trouble going down there to Cuba to get me, and I suppose he has a right to know about it; and it can't make any difference to Paula now."

It happened that when Van Cleve came up that evening, according to custom, he was quite excited — for him — over some news of his own, and launched into it with astonishing loquacity almost the minute he was ushered into the room, amongst the family, without noticing the silence and the slight constraint that hung over them all. "What do you think? The most remarkable event of the present century has just taken place!" he proclaimed with actual joviality; his brows' feet all puckered together; the line at the corner of his mouth curved; all his harsh, tired face relaxed as he looked around and felt their kind expectancy. They were the only people he knew who took a real and selfless interest in him — or so Van thought; he did not except his own family. He had never had much talent for making friends, nor, as he considered, enough time; he had always been so busy. But the Gilberts understood; and his lean-nurtured heart fairly sunned itself in their affection. The men who called him a skinflint — and he may have become something of a skinflint by this time — would have been confounded could they have seen him in his present environment.

"Did I ever say anything to any of you about that old farm my grandfather owned up in Union County? Bob, I've talked to you about it, haven't I? I've a kind of hazy recollection of having mentioned it —

probably in June or December when the taxes came round," he threw in with a chuckle. "It's always been perfectly worthless. Grandpop Van Cleve didn't make many mistakes, and I've often thought the old gentleman must have had to take some man's property on a bad debt — that would have accounted for the farm. Didn't I ever speak of it before?"

But nobody could remember having heard a word about the Union County farm, so Van Cleve went on: "It's had a great many vicissitudes — close calls, you might say. Once we were on the verge of selling it, and I was to have gone to Eureka College with the money. I wanted to go with you, don't you remember, Bob? Good gracious, that must be nearly twenty years ago! Anyhow, the lawyers objected to something about the title, and we never did sell it. And here the other day, they struck gas on the farm next to it, not thirty yards away from our line! I've got two offers already for the land at prices that would raise your hair. I have to go up there and see about it; looks to me as if the entire community had gone insane on the subject of natural gas."

"Hooray!" cried Bob, weakly; and, in lieu of a hat, seized and tossed into the air a copy of the *Record-World* which was lying handy; "Van Cleve, you're going to be a millionaire! I see it coming! Remember the humble friends of your youth, and give us a ride in your private car once in a while!" Everybody was unaffectedly delighted. They liked to figure Van Cleve on the high road to prosperity after all his hard years.

"Well, I haven't got there yet, you know. You don't want to bank too much on anything," he warned, as the felicitations subsided; and so characteristic was this remark that Bob burst out laughing again, in pure enjoyment. Van Cleve shook his head at him good-naturedly. "That's all right, my son. You can

laugh, but nobody ever got something for nothing, yet. Everybody has to pay for his good luck one way or another," he observed sagely. "But this rather reverses the usual story, doesn't it? You're constantly hearing from the man who could have bought Calumet-and-Hecla for a song back in 'eighty-one; or the other man that gave Carnegie a tip about steel; or the fellow that told John D. Rockefeller coal-oil was a good thing. If all of the men that have missed their chances that way were laid out end to end, they'd make a band that would go seven times around the earth and lap over a third of the way! I'm one of 'em myself. Where's Lorrie? Has she gone out? I wanted to tell her."

Lorrie had a headache — she was not well — she had been very much upset by something that had happened that morning, he was told; poor Van's face fell noticeably at this news. And he was quite unconscious of the unnatural awkwardness with which the Professor and Mrs. Gilbert got themselves out of the room; suddenly he found himself alone with Bob, who looked at him apprehensively from the sofa.

"You would never guess who was here to-day, Van," he said hesitatingly. "It was — well, it was Paula."

"Paula? You don't mean —? *Paula!* Is *she* here? Here at the house?"

"No, she's at the hotel still. But she came out this morning."

"To see you?" Van Cleve asked rather blankly. His first thought was that Bob's wife must have wanted to patch up a reconciliation with him, before he died; and he wondered uncomfortably if he himself would be obliged to meet her.

"No, no, I didn't see her. She didn't come to see me. It was Lorrie she wanted to see. She wanted to tell Lorrie something —" Bob went on with the tale

haltingly and not very clearly, as could be judged by the perplexity in his friend's eyes. Van did not interrupt; he had the gift of not interrupting; but at one stage of the narrative, as Bob paused, he said not without satisfaction:—

"I always thought that girl was a bad lot. Now she tells you the child wasn't yours at all, hey? If you'll remember, Bob, I suggested that to you once, but you wouldn't pay any attention to me. I daresay she had no idea who its father was —"

"No, no, Van Cleve! It wasn't *that*! Don't think *that*!" Bob cried out with tragic earnestness, raising himself painfully. "You've got it all wrong. Don't think a thing like *that*. You — she — I —" he began to cough pitifully.

"Here, lie down. You know the doctor said you weren't to bear your weight on that side," said Van Cleve, alarmed. "Lie down, Bob. Where's that stuff you take? I'll get you some of it. Never mind, you can tell me the rest after a while. You keep quiet now, old man."

Bob dropped back on the pillows, exhausted, eying the other with affection and a certain wonder and confusion of mind, as Van Cleve carefully measured out and administered the medicine, using his big, strong, steady hands with surprising delicacy.

"I can't always make you out, Van," he said. "You're so hard sometimes I feel as if talking to you was like dashing myself against a rock. And then again you're — you're so solidly *good*! I can't make you out."

"Oh, I think I must be about like everybody else," said Van Cleve, embarrassed. "You'd better not try to talk any more to-night. It'll keep till next time, won't it?"

But no, it wouldn't keep, Bob strenuously assured him, so Van Cleve, anxious not to let him excite him-

self further, sat down again with folded arms, and at last heard the whole. At the end he shifted his attitude slightly, staring broodingly on the floor. After a while, he asked: "How did Lorrie —? Is that why she —? I mean, is that what has made her sick?"

"She isn't really sick. She's just — well, all to pieces. And no wonder! It's terribly hard for her. Mother says she's burned up all his letters and everything. It's terribly hard."

"It's been hard for Lorrie for ten years," said Van Cleve. "He died once, and as if that were not hard enough, he's been killed all over again. Once was enough, I think. She might have been spared the ten years, and this thing at the end of them."

Bob explained feverishly. "If I could have had any *notion* that Paula would come here, and let it all out this way, I'd have stopped her. I'd have tried to stop her, anyway. But I — why, I didn't *dream* of such a thing! it never came into my head that she —"

"I wasn't thinking about *her*. I'm not talking about anything *she's* done," Van Cleve said.

He spoke in such a tone that Robert, looking into his overcast face, began to plead with a childish fearfulness. "Look here, you — you don't think I did wrong, *do* you, Van Cleve? After all, it was — it was worse for me than for anybody else. I was going to tell you the whole truth down there at Siboney, on the boat that morning, you know. I had just found it out from those letters I took off of poor Cort's dead body. I was starting to tell you when it came out that you and all the rest, Lorrie and everybody, thought — thought *I* was the one. I didn't know why Paula fastened it on me. I never had anything to do with her *that* way —" His emaciated face flushed and paled distressingly. "I've never been that sort. No credit to *me* — I'm just not that sort. But none of you realized that; you couldn't have been expected to. And all at once

I saw that I — well, that I could take the blame perfectly well —”

“I don’t see why you should. I don’t see what good you expected to do by *that*. And what good *have* you done?” said Van Cleve, bitterly. “What good *have* you done?”

Bob looked at him in helpless appeal. “I wanted to make it easier for Lorrie, Van. How could I tell it was all going to turn out this way? I wanted to make it easier for her. Why, don’t you remember, you yourself started in and gave me the most awful roast about how I’d treated her, and what a care and a trial I’d been to her for years — and you were all *right*, too, Van; you didn’t put it a bit too strong, and every word you said was the flat truth, I knew that —” he interrupted himself in eager acknowledgment. “It just came to me then that I could make it up to her a little. That’s why I did it. I wanted to save Lorrie all I could. Seemed to me that was the least I could do!”

“To save her from what?” said Van Cleve. He got up and walked twice or thrice up and down the room, while the other’s troubled gaze followed him. “Do you know you’ve let Lorrie waste ten years of her life — ten of her best years? For what? For nothing! For the sake of that cheap seducer — that flimsy, sensual —” he caught sight of Bob’s face, and stopped — “Very well, I won’t say anything more about him, only that you yourself must know in your heart, Bob, that he wasn’t worth a minute of it. She’d have wasted all the rest of her time, if this Jameson woman hadn’t come here, and let her know the truth about him at last. You call that saving Lorrie? I don’t, Bob.”

“I know — I know — I’ve sometimes felt it wasn’t all right, somehow — when I saw the way she felt,” said Bob, tremulously. “But I want to ask you one thing, Van Cleve; I want to ask you what you’d have done in my place? Would *you* have told her?”

"Oh, *me!* It's no question of what I'd have done : not have done," said Van Cleve, fiercely impatient. It would have been an altogether different position for me, anyhow."

"But *would* you? You might have found it out — anybody might have found it out," persisted the other. If you had known, would *you* have told Lorrie about it? *Would* you, Van?"

"Why — I — I — well, *no*, then, I wouldn't have!" an shouted in a kind of angry confusion, striding about the room, avoiding his friend's eye. "No, I wouldn't ; of course I wouldn't! Think I'm going to run around babbling stories about a dead man? And to *Lorrie!* tell you my position's different — entirely different — "

"But you wouldn't have told her, either," interrupted Robert, without triumph, however. He fumbled weakly with the fringe of the counterpane for a moment, then, with a quick movement, turned towards the other face of wistful affection, penitence, earnest desire to make all clear. "You see how it was with me, then, Van. I thought you'd understand. And I liked Cort. That was another reason. You know I didn't mean to be wrong; I never thought of it harming anybody but myself. It wasn't until after the whole business was done and settled and couldn't be undone, that I began to be afraid I'd made a mistake after all. I mean when I — when I saw how it was going to — affect that, you know. I've always felt badly about it, Van. I've always been hoping that Lorrie would get over it," said poor Bob, who himself had never had the least trouble in "getting over" anything, his story was as water for other people's sins, misfortunes as well as for his own. "I've depended on her getting over it, and then she wasn't thinking about that," said Van angrily. Even as he uttered the words, he

suddenly aware that that was precisely what he had been thinking about in some inner recess of his mind. A dark color came into his face; he went and sat down by Bob's cot again. "I suppose that was really at the bottom of what I said just now," he confessed, humiliated. "Not that Lorrie would marry me, anyhow, you know, Bob. But I might have had a better chance. I didn't mean to be rough with you. I know you were doing it for the best. I think now we ought all to be ashamed of ourselves because we were so ready to be deceived — so ready to think evil of you. It must have been hard for you to stand. There are people that don't think any too well of *me*; I know how you must have felt."

"No, you don't, because you aren't like me," Bob retorted with a curious and touching lightness, in open relief at his friend's change of tone. "It never did make much difference to me, Van — just once in a while, you know. It would have been hard for a man like you, I can understand that. But *me* — why, it didn't matter so much. Sometimes I've thought I'd like to have all of you know how it really happened. But you see I'd given all of Paula's letters back to her, so I couldn't prove anything. And I wasn't going to call on *her* for proof; and none of you would have believed me, if I'd sworn to the truth up and down. So I had to let things go as they were."

He offered this explanation with a simplicity that cut the other to the quick; yet Van Cleve knew that none of them had ever been consciously unjust or unmerciful to Bob. They had all tried their best to do what was right, and the result was a miserable muddle wherein everybody was somehow more or less in the wrong! "Why, I would have believed you, Bob," he said huskily; "we would all have believed you. Your bare word would have been enough at any time. What put that notion into your head?"



"Would you, Van Cleve?" said Bob, pleased; "well, that's good to hear. People generally haven't got much use for me, you know, and what I say doesn't go very far with them."

During the succeeding weeks Bob's case progressed, as had been foretold, with faint rallies, alternating with imperceptibly accelerated declines. The family could not hide it from themselves; yet Mrs. Gilbert still worked away at coverlids and bed-shoes and little sick-room conveniences; they still talked of next spring, next month, next week. It was habit. Robert had been a care to them so long, in one way or another, that they could not envisage a future without him, a time when he would no longer be on their minds to be loved, excused, petted, shielded. He himself was never plaintive, never fretful; and the end, when it came, was mercifully quick and quiet. Van Cleve, at his office, was called to the telephone one morning, towards the end of the winter; he had been at the house the night before and left Bob feeling better than for days, quite gay, and laughing over the comic papers some one had sent him. It was an instant before Van recognized Lorrie's voice, begging him to come out, in a hurried and frightened tone; Bob had had a good night; but somehow they did not think he looked so well this morning; he had been wishing Van Cleve would come; he seemed not to realize that it was daytime — early in the day; they had sent for the doctor —

Van Cleve got into his overcoat and hurried out; the winter day was dingily thawing, with a wan sky overhead, and the streets in a discolored slush. Van met the doctor picking his way down the Gilberts' unswept steps, between the treacherous, sliding lumps of ice and snow; they spoke together for a moment. Lorrie was waiting, and drew him into the hall. She was not crying, but her face trembled as she began to

speak in a guarded voice. "The doctor told you, didn't he? He has just seen Bob — he says it may be any time now. It's so strange — we thought Bob was better for a little while this morning. And then all at once — no, he's quite right in his head; he'll know you."

He followed her into the sick-room. Bob was lying there, propped on his pillows in the bright, fresh, pretty place they managed always to keep about him, looking somehow a little different from the way he had last night, as Van swiftly noted, but certainly no worse. Van Cleve went up to the bed, where the father and mother drew aside for him, and sat down close beside it, taking the other's hand; he said with that false heartiness that seems as if it never should deceive anybody, least of all the person for whom it is intended — Van said: "Well, Bob, how are you coming on, hey?"

Bob raised his head a little and looked at him with his old, sweet, boyish smile, confiding and gay. "Why, I'm about even, Van, old fellow!" he said. His head dropped back with so gentle and natural a movement, it was a full minute before any of them saw that he was dead.

## CHAPTER IX

### WHICH IS IN THE NATURE OF A FOOTNOTE

It would be appropriate and dramatic for this history to end as it began with a tavern-scene and drinking-chorus, — quintette of male voices and one soprano, — but unfortunately no such artistic climax is possible. For one thing, the old Saint Simon Hotel went out of existence the other day — Ichabod, its glory is departed ! In fact, I understand that most of the Ichabods have truly departed ; they have gone over to the Preston, or to some of the other magnificent, new, modern places of refreshment, and it is to the withdrawal of this Old Testament patronage that the passing of the Saint Simon may be traced, so they say. At any rate, it was sold up, closed up, boarded up, a year or so ago ; and will presently be torn down to make room for another skyscraper, no doubt.

And, secondly, as to the principals in that little scene with which we started out, we have lost some of the voices — well, well ! — and those of us who are left, being twenty years older, are not always in the best of form for singing. I have not seen Major Van Cleve since I don't know when ; he must be getting on in years now, although still, I suppose, a boy to his mother, who is eighty-seven, as her grandson tells me, but remarkably hale, erect, and well preserved.

"Does Mrs. Lucas continue to have those attacks of the heart that used to alarm all of you so much ?" I asked him.

Van Cleve considered a little. "Why, no, I don't

believe my aunt can be much troubled with those nowadays — at least they haven't written anything about it for a good while. Of course they would let me know if anything was the matter," he said at last.

They certainly would !

"The climate there suits her, I think," said Van Cleve. But what climate he meant, or where, I disliked to ask, he so evidently took it for granted that I knew all about their changes of residence — as if any mortal could !

"I've sometimes thought it was more nerves than heart with Aunt Myra, anyhow. She always seems to be more liable to — to get upset that way when she's worried or disappointed or out of spirits, you know," he added with a simplicity that defeated comment. And just then a salesman came up to say that the ladies were waiting for Mr. Kendrick up-stairs.

For where do you suppose this conversation took place ? It was at Messrs. Matthew & Luke's some time during the spring of 1910, the date being fixed in my mind by the fact that I had gone into the shop to look at summer furnishings for the porch. There I happened upon Van Cleve, roaming restlessly about the teak-wood stands, and the carved, or stained, or inlaid "odd pieces," occasionally stopping to turn up a price-tag absent-mindedly, or backing away embarrassed when he came face to face with himself in a mirror. The mere sight of him in such a place would have piqued one's curiosity ; but, taken with the intelligence that the ladies were waiting for him up-stairs (whereat his countenance lighted up visibly, and he put his watch back into its pocket without looking at it again), it was a guess-proof mystery. Nor was I much illuminated to encounter him once more, half an hour later, seriously inspecting a panelled oak chest in company with Mrs. and Miss Gilbert.

Their backs were towards me, but of course I recognized them at once. They were still in mourning —

Mrs. Gilbert will never take off that black veil she wears for Bob, — but Lorrie had a white wing in her hat, and her face, as she turned with some earnest speech and gesture to Van Cleve, was very bright, and happily interested. He listened, gravely nodding; and the picture they made was so startlingly domestic that when at length they observed me wavering in the background, I didn't know which way to look! I had heard of nothing happening recently in that quarter; but if something had happened, and was not yet announced —

However, I might have spared my benevolent excitement. Mrs. Gilbert came over to me with something of an apprehensive look — though Lorrie and Van themselves were quite cool and unruffled — and began to explain rather nervously and volubly. She and her daughter were helping Mr. Kendrick select the furniture for his new apartment. Yes, didn't I know about it? It was so nice. He was going to have one of those new apartments in "The Mantua"; he was tired out with boarding, and wanted to have a place to himself. Oh, yes, he was going to keep house regularly, like anybody else. The flat would be lovely; Lorrie wanted him to get that piece they were just looking at for the hall or dining-room —

"*Everybody* has an oak chest now, you know, Van," Lorrie put in eagerly; "and all your things will be in that solid, plain Old-English style."

"It does look good and solid," said Van Cleve; "what's it for?" At which inquiry, both ladies looked pretty well gravelled for an instant, but the salesman unhesitatingly stepped into the breach.

"Almost anything you choose — they're useful in a dozen ways — no limit to what you can put in one of them, actually!" he said with enthusiasm. "That old style of furniture, as your wife was just remarking, was made to *use*. That's the beauty of it, you know. Why, I sold one something like this to a gentleman out here

in the suburbs that said it would be the very thing for his boys to keep their baseball bats and uniforms and sweaters and all their athletic outfit in — ha, ha! But now for yourself, why — er — storage — furs, household linen —”

Van's wife! But, as I was careful not to catch anybody's eye, I cannot say how this mistaken reference was received.

“Oh, blankets and things? It would be pretty nice for those, wouldn't it?” said Van Cleve; “all right, Lorrie, I'll take it, if you say so.”

“It will go beautifully with the rest of your things,” Lorrie said, her eyes dwelling on the chest delightedly. Then businesslike anxiety settled upon her brow. “Oughtn't we to go and look at the Oriental rugs while we're here?” she asked Van Cleve, tensely.

“Who's going to attend to the ‘blankets and things’ for him, by the way?” I inquired of Mrs. Gilbert, as we followed them in the direction of the rug department. “Men don't know anything about that part of house-keeping.”

“Oh, Lorrie and I will see to all that. She'll tell him,” said Mrs. Gilbert, energetically; “he'll do anything Lorrie says — I mean —” she reddened a trifle, and amended hastily: “I mean he has confidence in her judgment, and he knows that she won't have any foolish, extravagant ideas. In fact, *he's* the one that wants to spend the money, and has to be held back all the time. Whenever Lorrie looks twice at a thing, he thinks she wants it — for *him*, I mean, you know, of course — and she can hardly keep him from buying it! She wants him to — that is, he wants her to — that is —” and here poor Mrs. Gilbert came so perilously near losing her balance, conversationally, that I charitably interrupted to right her, by asking if Van had hired any servants yet, or did he mean to?

“Yes, he's got a Japanese. They say they're ideal, but you never know —”

"Well, at any rate, the silver and brass will all be kept polished," said Lorrie, catching the drift of our talk. "Men always do that if they don't do anything else." And, the rugs having probably brought a kindred subject to her mind, she added to me over her shoulder: "volunteers are needed for the curtain and cushion service," and laughed her old kind, sweet laugh.

"Curtains and cushions!" said I, agog. And I daresay I stared very hard at Van Cleve, who neither saw nor heard me. He himself had his eyes fixed on the back of Lorrie's head where her thick hair showed under her hat, richly brown, except where the light from a near-by window burnished it.

"I never heard of a man that cared to have curtains and cushions around," said I, flat; "but I'd like to help with them, if —"

"No, no, I was just in fun. I'd rather make them all myself — really I would. I don't need any help," Lorrie quickly assured me. She seated herself on a pile of rugs, and promptly forgot everything else. "There, that copper-color and deep blue one, that would be beautiful in the living-room, Van."

"All right. Put that one aside," he ordered the clerk, briskly. "Have 'em put aside whatever you like, Lorrie. I don't know a thing about colors and — and all that. Pick out what you like."

A few days afterwards when I went over to the Gilberts, I found Lorrie up to her knees in fine white swiss and scrim draperies, measuring, cutting, and tearing with the hand and eye of an expert. Cretonnes, charmingly patterned with cockatoos, baskets of roses, or drooping garlands of fruits lay all about her little bedroom; there were down pillows, there were squares of Chinese embroidery, there were yards upon yards of white cotton fringes.

"Well, why shouldn't he have his things pretty?" she retorted almost sharply to my satirical comments.

"Men really like pretty things as much as women do. I'm determined to make Van Cleve comfortable for once in his life, anyhow. Nobody's ever cared whether he was comfortable or not, or done a thing for him, or — or had things look nice for him, in his whole life!" said Lorrie most unjustly; but she tore off another breadth with a fierce little snap that I realized finished the argument. And, although she plainly had her hands full with the work, she could scarcely be persuaded to let me share it, and parted with some of the stuff with a reluctance almost jealous!

Any one might think that I had "put my foot in it," as the saying goes, often enough already; but there was one more experience reserved for me, one more moment of supreme awkwardness about which, however, nobody save myself and one other lady, my friend Mrs. Michael Flannery, who goes out charwomaning at a dollar-thirty-five a day, has known up to the present hour. It occurred when I had got my quota of curtains for Mr. Kendrick's rooms finished, and carried them in a tidy parcel over to "The Mantua" according to Lorrie's directions, a certain Wednesday afternoon which she had named as the day of installation. By that time, the last of the cleaning, papering, and so on (all of which she seemed to have under her personal charge) would be done, she said, and Van's "things" could be put in place. In fact, when I reached there, this work appeared to be completed; going into the Mantuan corridors, I found Van's front door open — he had one of the roomiest and most sumptuous suites in the building! — and the first thing I saw in his hall was the oak chest, looking as roomy and sumptuous as its surroundings; it had got there ahead of me along with the rugs, some of which were spread down, and there was even a picture or two hung. But the place was surprisingly quiet; the janitor went along the outside hall with a step-ladder, and I heard a scrub-woman sluic-



ing a pail of water down Mr. Kendrick's kitchen sink, but that was all. Yet Lorrie had said that she and Van would both be there. I went in, stepping with an involuntary caution; but I got no farther than the living-room door, which, mercifully for me, was not wide open.

Perhaps they would not have been aware of me in any case. They were standing together in the middle of the room, and the girl had her two hands to her face, and it seemed to me that Van Cleve's arms were where they ought to be, and performing the best of offices. Retreating, I came eye to eye with the scrub-woman; we exchanged not a word, nor even a grin, but went on about our business with as little noise as possible. What evinced our perfect understanding and community of interest was the motion we both made, *sponte propria*, to draw the door a little nearer shut when we heard the janitor coming back; we were not going to have *him* gawking in on that scene, anyhow!

I have wondered since how it happened, what Van said, what she herself said and thought. The effort at home-making must have been too much for her resolution, her pride, her distrust of herself. She was crying a little, I think. Did she regret the lost years? Was she sorry for Van Cleve, for herself, in their happiness that need not have come so late? How should we know? At any rate, she does not look as if she had had occasion to shed many tears since; we have seldom beheld a more satisfied couple. And I feel sure that for all his reputed hardness and closeness, Van's greatest pleasure in life is in being able to give his wife everything she wants.

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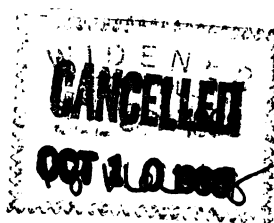








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